A form for formlessness the study of a primary structuring device in Thomas Wolfe's novel "Look Homeward, Angel".

Laurence C. LeCapelain
University of Windsor

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholar.uwindsor.ca/etd

Recommended Citation
https://scholar.uwindsor.ca/etd/6310

This online database contains the full-text of PhD dissertations and Masters' theses of University of Windsor students from 1954 forward. These documents are made available for personal study and research purposes only, in accordance with the Canadian Copyright Act and the Creative Commons license—CC BY-NC-ND (Attribution, Non-Commercial, No Derivative Works). Under this license, works must always be attributed to the copyright holder (original author), cannot be used for any commercial purposes, and may not be altered. Any other use would require the permission of the copyright holder. Students may inquire about withdrawing their dissertation and/or thesis from this database. For additional inquiries, please contact the repository administrator via email (scholarship@uwindsor.ca) or by telephone at 519-253-3000 ext. 3208.
A FORM FOR FORMLESSNESS

the study of a primary structuring device in Thomas Wolfe's

novel Look Homeward, Angel

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies through the
Department of English in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts at Assumption
University of Windsor

by

LAURENCE C. LeCAPELAIN
B.A., University of Western Ontario, 1953

Windsor, Ontario, Canada
1962
INFORMATION TO USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleed-through, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## PART I

**THE PROBLEM AND THEORETICAL SOLUTION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I CRITICS REVIEWED</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II AN EXPLORATION OF WOLFE'S INTENTION</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III A THEORY OF WOLFE'S PRINCIPAL STRUCTURING DEVICE</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## PART II

**THE DEMONSTRATION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV THE PRINCIPLE OF JUXTAPOSITION AT WORK IN THE DELINEATION OF CHARACTER</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V THE PRINCIPLE OF JUXTAPOSITION AT WORK IN THE THEMES</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI THE PRINCIPLE OF JUXTAPOSITION AT WORK IN THE FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX A</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX B</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX C</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am very pleasantly aware of a deep sense of gratitude which I feel toward a number of people without whose aid I could not have completed this study. To Eugene McNamara, M.A., who suggested the problem in his English 595 course I owe special thanks for his consideration, his loyalty and his help both as a friend and a mentor. To his wife Margie I owe a considerable amount of coffee and not a few spoiled plans. To the Rev. C. P. Crowley, C.S.B., Ph.D, I owe encouragement and a sympathetic reading. To Rev. J. P. O'Meara, C.S.B., Ph.D., I owe a reading which changed and improved some first impressions. To Arthur Padley, Ph.D., and Robert Walton, M.A., I owe continued and helpful assistance in the discovery of objectivity and scholarly distance. To the staff of the Assumption University Library I owe valuable time and material which they tirelessly gave and gathered. To my typist Mrs. Helen Haberer I owe a valour beyond any call to duty.

And to my wife Bernadette and my daughter Mary-Allyson I owe, faith, patience, sanity and a round and happy world when everything was flat and dry and ready to explode.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
ABSTRACT

At the core of this study lies a problem about the form and structure of Thomas Wolfe's first novel Look Homeward, Angel. In the first chapter, four critical positions that were prominent before 1955 are explored. There were those who saw no form, those who saw no need for form, those who saw recognizable though adapted forms, and those who believed that Wolfe was creating a new aesthetic of his own. Holding this latter view three doctoral candidates, Irving Halperin, Lester Hurt and Larry Rubin analysed the entire tetralogy of Wolfe's work but came to differing conclusions. Thus the need for more work was established.

The second chapter presents Wolfe's own intentions as a writer particularly as they were voiced by him in letters written before the publication of his novel. In this way every effort has been made to avoid judgements made by the author which may have been the result of critical reviews.

The third chapter sets out to show that Wolfe's intention to capture in his fiction an enormous vision of life leads us to the place where we can accept the probability of the structuring device of juxtaposition (the placing of two things, most often opposites, side by side in order to lead the mind of the reader to an intuitive fusion and a new totality). A plausible genesis in the dialectic of Hegel is suggested.
The last three chapters trace through a demonstration from the text the principle of juxtaposition as it can be seen at work: first, in the way the characters are created and related to each other, secondly, in how the controlling ideas or themes are arranged, and thirdly, in the way the figurative language illustrates the themes and furthers the purposes of the novel.

Three appendices continue the work respectively of the last three chapters in a summary form and they indicate the number of times and pages where certain juxtapositions recur.
INTRODUCTION

Thomas Wolfe, who began his literary career with the publication of *Look Homeward, Angel* in 1929, has been alternately glorified and vilified by his critics. As Richard Walser has pointed out in his Introduction to *The Enigma of Thomas Wolfe*, his works have, on the one hand, been described by such adjectives as "enormous", "discerning", "superb", "gargantuan" and, on the other, they have been labelled by such terms as "bulky", "formless", "fatuous", "sprawling" and "undisciplined". This diversity of critical opinion challenges the student in an excellent area of study. I have chosen the novel, *Look Homeward, Angel*, as subject for a close study and a detailed structural analysis.

It will be my objective to establish that a major principle of form dominates the structure of this work. I am convinced that such a principle operating through the development of the novel raises it above the criticism which classifies it as "bulky", "formless", "fatuous", "sprawling" and "undisciplined". This examination will, I hope, give real and scholarly substantiation to the formerly intuitive belief of all those who consider *Look Homeward, Angel* as one of the great novels of the American literary heritage.

The defence which I propose does not include an exhaustive study of all the critical writing on Wolfe's work since such a study is independent of my task in examining
Look Homeward, Angel in the light of its formal structure. A brief summary of the more prominent critical positions on Wolfe is necessary, however, because much of this criticism is concerned with the problem of form in Wolfe's works. I have closely examined previous scholarship so that I may present the four basic positions which are held by his critics.
CHAPTER I

CRITICS REVIEWED

The first position is held by those critics who maintain that Thomas Wolfe, despite the fact that he was a creative genius, ruined his art through a disregard of formal design. Among those who hold this view, Bernard De Voto is perhaps the most vociferous. He has written that, although Wolfe wrote some of the finest fiction of our day a great part of his work is not fiction at all but simply material with which he struggled only to be defeated in the end. Another critic who aligns himself with De Voto is Dayton Kohler. He has said that Wolfe failed as a novelist because he tried to evade the responsibilities of his form. Kohler believes that one of the first structural laws of the novel is that it must be a communication of experience realized in terms of character and situation. In his estimation, Wolfe did not obey this formal law because he could not express his larger meaning through the form of the immediate story. He fell back instead upon the use of rhetoric and apostrophe.

Robert Penn Warren and John Peale Bishop, too, belong to this first group of critics for they praise on the one hand and condemn on the other. Agreeing that Wolfe had an


enormous talent, both of their voices are raised as one in demanding that the meaning of the novel be reflected in its structure. Indeed, they are agreed in stating that there is little if any structure at all in his work.

It is interesting to note that one element is common to all the criticism which reflects the first position I have outlined. All of the critics in this group argue from the point of view that there is a definitely established aesthetic for the novel and that they are justified in their analyses because they are only demanding adherence to this aesthetic.

Many other critics are not so certain that a formal design or shape exists for the novel. Somerset Maugham, for example, goes so far as to insist that our great novels are formless and unwieldy. In his estimation, those authors who lose themselves in huge, loosely-constructed and intimate works create a rambling story which permits them to penetrate the psychology of curious characters so that they may capture a peculiar sense of reality. Maugham believes that a great number of our best novelists writing in English have found in rigid form a sort of airlessness which lets life slip through their fingers.

---

3 Robert Penn Warren, "The Hamlet of Thomas Wolfe", in Richard A. Walser, editor, op. cit., p. 120.


Maugham's conception of form in the novel leads us to the second group of critics. Betty Thompson appears to agree with Maugham in asking this pertinent question about Thomas Wolfe: "In what heavenly repository rests the Platonic prototype of the novel?" George Stevens, too, has decided that formlessness did no permanent harm to Wolfe's work. Wolfe was, according to Stevens, a writer of magnificent fragments which were so good that he "could get away with anything." Lee Allen adds his voice in support of this second group of critics in saying, "But in spite of his faults, the guy could write like hell."

The third critical position is held by those who find a recognizable form in Wolfe's work. In many instances this form has fallen into disuse or disfavor. Some critics have complained that Thomas Wolfe's work was too autobiographical and others like John Chamberlain have claimed that Look Homeward, Angel is not a novelist's novel and therefore there are quite a number of intelligent devotees of fiction who find its rough, fluid pattern too easy for their tastes. The answer to them according to Mr. Chamberlain is that it is unfair to condemn a good chronicle novel simply because the chronicle, through over emphasis has fallen out of fashion.


7 George Stevens, "Always Looking Homeward", Saturday Review of Literature, June 24, 1939, Vol. XX, No. 9, p. 6.


Henry Seidel Canby considers Of Time and the River, the sequel to Look Homeward, Angel, a picaresque novel. He states that structure in the ordinary narrative sense is lacking; instead, "the distraught mind of a poet of the twenties is Picaro, and he seeks through incidents and adventures a spiritual home".

The fourth group of critics believe that Wolfe attempted to create new forms as the basis for his work. W.P. Albrecht has said that the temporal logic of a Farewell to Arms or even the unity of character development found in Of Human Bondage and The Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man, cannot be found in Wolfe's work. According to this critic, it is the feeling of time - of flux and permanence - which unifies each of the completed novels and the four novels of Wolfe's career considered as one. Mr. Albrecht hints at something buried in the metaphoric texture. The form to which he alludes depends upon the theme of time and the recurring motifs, images and symbols. Albrecht seems to be interested in both the abstract and the concrete use as formalizing principles. Louis D. Rubin, Jr., says that Wolfe is far from formless, but he does not agree with the concept that Wolfe's idea of time is the unifying principle. According to him the form of Wolfe's novels depend upon the principle of development which carries the autobiographic protagonist from immaturity toward maturity, from rebellion toward acceptance, from roman-


ticism toward realism. Social consciousness and the discovery of America's true greatness are also parts of this larger development. It is a progression from anguished, first person art toward the kind of artistry represented in the *Hills Beyond*: third person, objective representational fiction. Mr. Rubin seems to be describing what could be classified as an apprenticeship novel.

Both Joseph Warren Beach and George Snell find similarities between Wolfe's novels and music. Mr. Beach says Wolfe's writing is like the music of Wagner, Strauss and Tchaikovsky. Mr. Snell has gone further and explained what he means by the similarity between Wolfe's novels and the form associated with romantic music. According to him, Wolfe demonstrates the recurrent themes and long swells of counterpoint and development which are a part of this musical form. In this way the four novels of Wolfe's career become four panels in one gigantic novel and through musical form have a beginning, middle and end. Mr. Snell has also pointed out that he agrees with Mr. Albrecht in seeing time as the central concept in Wolfe's books. They are in this way related in kind to Proust's similarly immense novel, *Remembrance of Things Past*. Like Proust, Wolfe may be taken as an author who attempted to recapture experience, to re-


No summary of the critical opinions held on Wolfe would be satisfactory that did not attempt to bring the reader up to date. For this reason it will be necessary to examine carefully the latest research available. In 1956 and 1957, three students received doctoral degrees for their dissertations on Thomas Wolfe, and each one considered the problem of form in all four of the novels, considered as a single unit. Each student, independently of the others, came to the conclusion that Wolfe shows more form than he had been given credit for by earlier critics. Nevertheless, they disagreed with each other on the exact nature of the formal principles at work.

Irving Halperin begins his doctoral dissertation by admitting that Wolfe shows a certain lack of controlled formal design, but he goes on to say that readers do feel a sense of unity pervading Wolfe's novels and he suggests that the student must account for this unity. Mr. Halperin states that it is Wolfe's world, which suggests the endless flow of human experience in a continuous process of expansion that is the center of all form in Wolfe's work. According to him all the novels "open out" and they are to be considered in terms of accumulative process rather than in terms of formal structure. In this way the basis of unity is in a controlling idea - the quest of a hero. This hero called Eugene Gant and
at other times George Weber can be readily identified with
Thomas Wolfe and it is his search for order and maturity in
his life and art which is the quest. This quest follows the
pattern of the apprenticeship novel in that the hero attempts
to find a personal salvation by adjusting to his fellow men.
But unlike the hero of the typical apprenticeship novel,
Wolfe's hero does not make any such permanent adjustment. The
growth of the hero and his quest does not follow a straight
line and the controlling idea of Wolfe's novels which is
growth to maturity often means confusion and vacillation.
There is, however, according to Mr. Halperin, a certain shape
to the novel, a recurring four part pattern which runs through
the entire work. In the first part of this pattern, the hero
escapes from whatever circumstances are frustrating his develop-
ment; in the second, he feels either lost or trapped by his
fury; in the third, he returns to his roots in the past, usu-
ally through recall memory, for the purpose of defining his
values and giving his life direction. In the last part of
the pattern he attempts to adjust to the world through self-
experimentation and increasing self-awareness.16

It can be readily seen that Mr. Halperin believes that
the basis of unity in Wolfe's work is the life of the hero
readily identified as Wolfe himself. Mr. Halperin calls this
a controlling idea, the quest of the hero for order and
maturity.

16 Irving Halperin, The Basis and Nature of Unity in
the Novels of Thomas Wolfe, Doctoral Dissertation, submitted
to Washington University, St. Louis, 1957, pp. 12-16.
Larry Jerome Rubin in his dissertation seeks for the secret of Wolfe's form in recurring themes and images and according to him there are five major themes. It is interesting to note that the "quest" theme so prominent a part of Mr. Halperin's analysis is only one of the themes mentioned by Mr. Rubin and according to him it is pronounced only in *Of Time and the River* and *The Web and the Rock*. Mr. Rubin states that the theme which is central to Wolfe's first novel *Look Homeward, Angel* is "the lost paradise". This theme of the "lost paradise" appears much less frequently in the last three books but its concept is important because the themes in the other books seem to spring directly or indirectly from it. Mr. Rubin states that since Wolfe feels that birth brings loss of enchantment and since birth is an event taking place at a point in the past any means by which he can make the past live again will serve to bring him closer to the paradise he once knew. Events prior to his birth are preferable, since then he was still in paradise but events of his own childhood are also eminently worthy of recreation because the echoes of the lost paradise are then still relatively strong and because during his childhood he still enjoyed a measure of the innocence and security his soul knew in heaven. In this same way the theme "halting the flow of time" and the author's obsession with time and his attempts to recapture the past through memory are intimately woven together with the concept of the lost paradise. Mr. Rubin mentions that the theme of "alienation" is also
the direct result of the loss of prenatal paradise since the hero feels like a stranger on the earth and thus he suffers a profound and haunting feeling of not belonging. This feeling of alienation results in the quest for an earthly paradise of love and fame and thus the "quest" theme is motivated by the hero's sense of having lost his heavenly paradise. This search for a substitute paradise in this life is a kind of compensation and this becomes the theme of the two middle novels Of Time and the River, and The Web and the Rock. The feeling of alienation, however, is not resolved until a maturing sense of social consciousness, which is the theme of the last novel, You Can't Go Home Again, makes the hero aware that he is indeed a member of the family of mankind.

As convinced as Larry Rubin that recurring themes are the basis of form in Wolfe's novels is the third student to receive his doctoral degree, Lester E. Hurt, who in the fall of 1956 submitted his dissertation to the University of Minnesota. Even though there is agreement between these two scholars on the nature of the formal thematic principle which binds Wolfe's novels together, they disagree completely as to the major themes. All of the themes discussed by Mr. Rubin were personal, belonging to the life of the hero Eugene; the lost paradise, alienation, the idea of stopping the flow of time, the quest, and the hero's sense of social consciousness.

On the other hand, Mr. Hurt finds that the central themes are all social in nature and are only incidentally related to Eugene. The themes that he finds are all related to American culture. According to Mr. Hurt’s analysis Thomas Wolfe believed that American culture is characterized by division and fragmentation and it lacks cohesion and pattern. The central theme, therefore, according to him, is that Americans are peculiarly a nomadic people, a race of wanderers searching for a way, a door, for a form which will impose order on the chaos of their lives. Mr. Hurt finds through a close reading of Wolfe’s four novels three aspects of this fragmented culture. The first and by far the most important is the division between the spirit of the craftsman and that of the owner of property, – that is – property held for the purpose of profit. These two divisions find their chief representatives in the characters of Gant and Eliza, the father and the mother of the protagonist. Gant represents the craftsman, the skilled individual who actually makes something. He is in this sense an artist more interested in creativity than in profit. Eliza on the other hand represents the worst in capitalist exploitation. Everything is judged by the profit motive. Mr. Hurt goes on to say that a further fragmentation of American culture is the direct result, according to Wolfe’s views, of the class struggle and this is representative of the split developing between North and South, between city and village cultures, where the male line of craftsmen belongs to the cities of the north and the female line of
profit-devouring owners belongs to the villages of the south. In this way Mr. Hurt veers dramatically away from other critics in his analysis, for he sees Wolfe as a serious analyst of American culture rather than as an artist whose work is a lyrical expression of a personal universe.

I have chosen to explore the views of these most recent scholars at greater depth, not only because I want to demonstrate that continued disagreement exists, and thus the need for more research, but because I want to show how my own view proceeds from their views and synthesizes them.

Summarizing the views of the critics in terms of my own opinion and in the light of my own analysis is a relatively simple matter. It is obvious that I cannot agree with either of the first two positions held by the critics since I have already stated that I believe that there is a strong structural principle at work in Wolfe's first book and I cannot deny or even minimize through lauding other literary virtues the effect of this formalizing element. My whole thesis is in direct dispute with these critics.

The third position which seeks to align Wolfe's work with other literary masterpieces or with other established forms is praiseworthy in terms of a system of classification, but it fails to stress what is perhaps more important; the isolation of that element or those elements which make any good work of art different and original. For this reason it seems important to me to view *Look Homeward, Angel* from within

---

its own structure to see the principles of its own growth and its own life as art. This is why a close reading and a close structural analysis is necessary.

I have no argument with the fourth position taken by the earlier critics or with the scholars who have recently received their doctoral degrees except to say that they did not go far enough. It seems to me that each has stressed only one side of the issue and that none of them have accounted for the positions held by the others. The advantage of my position is that it not only allows for these other views but it also makes use of them in harmony with each other. Under the principle of form which I call juxtaposition the clash of opposition is welcome, indeed, it is essential.

Before I begin to discuss this principle and its operation, however, it will be necessary to look at the work of one more critic — Wolfe himself.
CHAPTER II

AN EXPLORATION OF WOLFE'S INTENTION AS A WRITER

In this chapter I propose to explore Wolfe's intentions as a writer particularly as they were voiced by him in letters written before the publication of Look Homeward, Angel. Certain published remarks made by him after 1929 will also be studied if it can be demonstrated that they follow directly from, and elaborate upon his intentions concerning the novel. The point of this review is to establish what was intentional in the writing of the novel as distinct from explanations made afterward as a response to critical opinion.

It will be shown that Wolfe had two specific intentions which he wanted to implement in Look Homeward, Angel. First, he wanted to use his own life, his own experience on every level of understanding and emotion as the source of the vision of life which he had, and which he expected the novel to reflect. Second, he wanted to reveal that his vision of life was essentially dichotomous, that he was acutely conscious of opposites in conflict. He hoped to start with the most basic division, life as it is lived by a human within himself—introverted, and life as it is lived in the world with others—extroverted.

In 1926, Wolfe wrote to Mrs. J. M. Roberts, a high school teacher who influenced him greatly during his early
years. In this letter he gives us a preview of the book which was to become Look Homeward, Angel:

I have begun work on a novel .... its unity is simply this: I am telling the story of a powerful creative element trying to work its way toward an essential isolation: a creative solitude; a secret life--its fierce struggles to wall this part of its life away from birth, first against the public and savage glare of an unbalanced nervous brawling family group; later against school, society, and the barbarous invasions of the world; in a way the book marks the progression toward freedom; in a way toward bondage--but this did not matter: to me the one is as beautiful as the other .... Just subordinate and leading up to the main theme is as desperate and bitter a story between two people as you ever knew--a man and his wife--the one with an inbred, and also instinctive, terror and hatred of property; the other with a growing mounting lust for ownership that finally is tinged with mania--a struggle that ends in decay, death, desolation.1

In this statement we see two strong themes emerging. The first is a desire for an essential isolation belonging to the artist. It is a longing to live in separation from all social groupings, the family, society, and all those things which Wolfe calls "the invasion of the world." Introversion is predominant here. The other theme is that revealed in the story of a bitter struggle between a man and his wife who represent opposite forces. They are caught up in a mortal battle over the ownership of property and the use of that property for making a profit. This second theme involves economic issues and is essentially sociological. These two themes oppose each other.

In his dissertation, mentioned in the last chapter, Mr. Hurt has explored the implications of the second theme, that is, Wolfe's sociological interest in all four of the novels. On the other hand Mr. Rubin, in his dissertation, has studied the implications of the theme contained in the private and buried life of the protagonist who is readily identified as Wolfe himself. Each scholar seems to be unaware of the work of the other and neither of them explains why these two contrasted themes exist in the same work, side by side. If we study some of the other statements Wolfe made in letters before the publication of Look Homeward, Angel, we can begin to see how these two themes grew in his mind.

Considering the first theme, we know that, at Harvard, Wolfe studied the English Romantic poets under the guidance of John Livingston Lowes and that he was particularly moved by Coleridge. In another letter that he wrote to Mrs. Roberts he said:

I wish I could tell you more of my book. I shall call it *Alone,* *Alone* for the idea that broods over it and in it and behind it is that we are all strangers upon this earth we walk on. That naked and alone do we come into life, and alone a stranger each to each we live upon it. The title as you know, I have taken from the poem I love best, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner.*

But Wolfe also saw himself as a kind of social reformer, for he has said:

I will step on top, I will not hesitate to say what I think of those people who shout

---

progress, progress, progress—when what they mean is more Ford automobiles, more Rotary Clubs, more Baptist Ladies' Social Unions. What I shall try to get into their little pint measure minds is...that there is beauty in this world, - beauty even in this wilder-
ness of ugliness and provincialism.  

In this same social vein Wolfe has said, "by instinct, by inheritance, by every natural sympathy and affection of my life, my whole spirit and feeling is irresistibly on the side of the working class".  

In these remarks we see the same dichotomy in Wolfe's thinking. He is concerned with the beautiful, with the imaginative and unearthly quality which springs out of private fantasy. On the other hand he realizes that a man has to work in society and be a part of it.

Both of these aspects are part of Wolfe's total vision of life and he has said that his task is;

to know life and to understand it and interpret it without fear or favor. This...is a man's work and worthy of a man's dignity. For life is not made up of sugary, sticky, sickening Edgar A. Guest sentimentality, it is not made up of a dishonest optimism, God is not always in His heaven, and all is not right with the world. It is not all bad, but it is not all good, it is not all ugly, but it is not all beautiful, it is life, the only thing that matters.

Again, Wolfe has written in a letter to his uncle, Henry A. Westall, "I write because I want to do the best that's in me, to create my vision of life as I have seen and known it and to leave something some day that may have, I hope some

---

3 John Skally Terry, editor, Thomas Wolfe's Letters to His Mother, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1943, p. 50.

4 Thomas Wolfe, "Writing is My Life", op. cit., p. 57.

5 Thomas Wolfe's Letters to His Mother, pp. 49-50.
enduring value." Above all, Wolfe's view was inclusive for he has said of life, "It is savage, cruel, kind, noble, passionate, selfish, generous, stupid, ugly, beautiful, joyous—it is all these and more and it is all these I want to know." 7

Here pairs of opposites are at work: beauty and ugliness, nobility and savagery, kindness and cruelty, selfishness and generosity, etc. Wolfe could not be satisfied with any statement about life which did not take into consideration the necessary fact that opposites exist side by side.

A beautiful summary of his vision of life can be gleaned from an early letter written to his mother. He says about his own experience,

When spring comes I think of a cool, narrow back-yard in North Carolina with green damp earth, and cherry trees in blossom. I think of a skinny little boy at the top of one of those trees, with the fragrant blooms about him, with the tang of sap in his nose, looking out on a world of back-yards, and building his castles in Spain. That's beauty, that's romance. I think of an old man in the grip of a terrible disease, who thought he was afraid to die, but who died like a warrior in an epic poem. That's beauty. I think of a boy of 26 years heaving his life away and gasping to regain it, I think of the frightened glare in his eyes and the way he seizes my hand and cries "What have you come home for." I think of the lie that trembles in my throat. I think of a woman who sits with a face as white and as set as if it were cut from marble, and whose fingers can't be unclasped from his hand. And the boy of 18 sees and knows for the first time that more than a son is dying, that part of a mother is being buried before her,—life and death. That something that she nursed and

---

6 The Letters of Thomas Wolfe, p. 317.
7 Thomas Wolfe's Letters to His Mother, p. 50.
loved, something out of her blood, out of her life is taken away. It's terrible but it's beautiful. 8

Now we can understand that the boy at the top of the tree is Wolfe himself; that the man is his father; that the boy who heaves his life away is his brother Ben; and, that the woman with the white face is Wolfe's mother. Incorporating all these experiences into his first novel, Wolfe is simply saying that all experience—no matter how tragic—genuinely lived, constitutes beauty. This is the vision of life which he intends to write about.

But Wolfe wished to include more than the elements of his early and tortured life in his vision. In order to become all-inclusive in his view of life, he intended to travel widely, to acquire more knowledge and to live intensely. He says, "I will go everywhere and see everything. I will meet all the people I can. I will think all the thoughts, feel all the emotions I am able, and I will write, write, write." 9

He has said further that "he will know this country when he is through as he knows the palm of his hand and he will put it on paper and make it true and beautiful." 10

Now we can understand Mr. Halperin's view that the unity in Wolfe's work comes from the maturing process in his hero. And, since Wolfe's heroes can be so readily identified with himself, it is his own life and his own maturity which is at the centre of his work. Wolfe may have summed up his

8 Ibid., p. 51. (My Italics)
9 Ibid., p. 53.
10 Ibid., p. 50.
intention when he wrote "I may wind up the whole thing with a book which will try to tell through the hundreds of members of one family the whole story of America."\(^{11}\) Wolfe evidently sees all serious writing as autobiographical. We are particularly conscious of this after the publication of *Look Homeward, Angel* for in a letter of February, 1930, he wrote to Mrs. Margaret Roberts: "The work I create is always inside me, and never outside me...and what reality I can give to what I create comes only from within. This relation to actual experience I have never denied, but every thinking person knows that such a relation is inevitable, and could not be avoided unless man can live in a vacuum..."\(^{12}\)

In the message to the reader which introduces *Look Homeward, Angel*, Wolfe says, "Fiction is not fact, but fiction is fact selected and understood, fiction is fact arranged and charged with purpose."\(^{13}\) This definition represents an aesthetic view which, lends to fiction a role more significant than that ordinarily conceived. Although Wolfe is not unique in his aesthetic view of fiction, it is important to notice that he believed a work of fiction to be dependent upon actual experience in the form of facts and that he also understood the importance of the process of selection in creating a work of fiction. The author of fiction must be extremely careful about the incidents, characters and actions


\(^{12}\) *The Letters of Thomas Wolfe*, p. 220.

which he selects as part of his story since fiction, as far as Wolfe is concerned, is fact understood, interpreted and made meaningful. Since Wolfe depends upon his own real experiences, he attempts to remember and to understand every shade of colour, every sound, every smell. Experience has passed through his creative insight and has been charged with purpose. He is not satisfied with understanding and interpreting experience merely on the sense level. He realizes that experience should pass from sense knowledge to conceptual knowledge. On this level, the individuating accidents of sense are dropped as the experience generates an idea which is true not only of this particular experience but also of many others. Thus a particular train, for instance, the now famous Pullman car K-19, of which Wolfe wrote so much, becomes "train" everywhere in America: "train" speeding across the prairies; "train" curving in upon itself around a mountain; "train" as Wolfe conceived them, not as a means of transportation but as way of exploring.

These experiences, now projected as thoughts on the level of the universal, lead to speculations on the metaphysical level. This is what Mr. Halperin meant in speaking of the "ever opening up" of Wolfe's work. From universal concepts, Wolfe begins to speculate on the nature of time, on the nature of man and of death. Thus he attempts to see his own experiences on all levels of understanding and in all its relationships with other experiences. But Wolfe realizes
that this particular ordering of experience, this distillation and crystallization of experience into higher fiction actually reveals more of life and of beauty than the outward experience could possibly generate.

Wolfe was peculiarly qualified for the task of understanding and writing about America since both by ancestry and by environmental experience he understood America's fragmented culture. His father had come down from the rich fields of Pennsylvania by way of Baltimore into the little town of Asheville, North Carolina. His mother had come from people who had lived in the mountains for generations. This marriage, then, is typical of American culture; it results from the wanderlust of Americans. The geographical distinctions between the parental backgrounds made Wolfe conscious at an early age of the essential division between the South and the North. On both sides of his family, there were rich traditions, different from each other, yet both deeply native and American. Wolfe realized from an early age that characteristics which were essentially opposite to each other existed side by side in American society.

In The Story of a Novel, he tells us of the tasks which lie before an American writer:

It seems to me that the task is one whose physical proportions are vaster and more difficult here than in any other nation on earth. It is not merely that in the culture of Europe and of the Orient the American artist can find no antecedent scheme, no structural plan, no body of tradition that can give his own work the validity and truth that it must have. It is not merely that he must somehow make a new tradition for himself,
derived from his own life and from the enormous space and energy of American life, the structure of his own design; it is not merely that he is confronted by these problems, it is even more than this, that the labor of a complete and whole articulation, the discovery of an entire universe and of a complete language, is the task that lies before him.

Wolfe dedicates himself to this task for he goes on to say:

...such is the nature of the struggle to which henceforth our lives must be devoted. Out of the billion forms of America, out of the savage violence and the dense complexity of all its swarming life; from the unique and single substance of this land of ours must we draw the power and energy of our own life, the articulation of our speech, the substance of our art.14

Wolfe realized that, because of this enormous task, he could not become the "Flaubert kind" of writer. He could not write a Flaubert novel which depends upon a distinct sense of plot and upon clearly delineated characters because the morals, the mores and the manners of traditional society were unavailable to him. He could not work his characters against the background of a traditional society because such a society did not exist. In America, people move from village cultures into city cultures, from southern cultures into northern cultures. In America, a dozen cultures imported from other lands exist side by side. Under these circumstances, it is difficult for an American artist to produce living and real characters rather than those which are representational, symbolic or stereotyped. Marius Bewley points this out:

There was that in the American ethos which gave an emotional primacy to ideas, which made them the proper subject matter of the novelist's art, while at the same time the novelist was deprived of that richness of nuance and tone which a traditional society can provide. The American novelist was necessarily at a disadvantage when he attempted to create character. The traditional codes and manners by which the European artist creates his men and women were not at his disposal.15

Wolfe, however, did create living, unforgettable characters. But it is undeniable that these characters represent ideas. They are characters of Gargantuan proportions often displaying grotesque peculiarities. His major characters in Look Homeward, Angel are presented in terms of certain value systems which animate their personalities and which give direction to their lives. These value systems are essentially in opposition to each other since they are created around the concept of the love and the hatred of property. But Wolfe's characters seen through the pattern of metaphor become mythic in quality and he saw himself not as a plot-maker but as a myth-maker.16 Wolfe's characters are larger than life.

George Santyana has made an observation about mythology which is applicable to Wolfe's work. Mythology, he says, is "the observation of things encumbered with all they suggest to a dramatic fancy."17 The essential difference, there-


16 The Letters of Thomas Wolfe, p. 485.

fore, between plot-making and myth-making is apparent. Plots are constructed by ordering things which certain characters do, as seen in the light of a traditional society, and arranging these things towards a significant conclusion through logic, intelligent order and rational demonstration. Myth-making, on the other hand, belongs to a deeper and more ingenuous level of thought. On this level, the myth-maker pours over the world his own experience, and the experience of others with an intense and indiscriminate interest, and he records all this behaviour against the background of his own dramatic fancy. In this sense, mythology mixes the two developments, the observable in things and the author's dramatic fancy, and places them together in one drama.

Mythology goes beyond rational demonstration and intelligent order and deals with a world which is rich and full of metaphysical images, spiritual emotion, depth and insight. Santayana has said that a developed mythology shows that man has taken a deep and active interest both in the world and in himself, in the introvert and the extrovert worlds, and has tried to link the two, and interpret the one by the other.

Myth is therefore a natural prologue to philosophy since the love of ideas is the root of both. Both are made up of things admirable to consider...mythology expresses reality in an eloquent metaphor. Its function is to show up some phase of experience in its totality and moral issue, as in a map we reduce everything geographically in order to overlook it better in its true relations.¹⁸

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 383.
Joseph Campbell has also observed a fact about myth which can be applied directly to Wolfe's work. He has said that myth plays a dual and almost paradoxical role. It leads a man away from his local, historical conditions toward an ineffable experience which makes him one with his race and all of mankind; at the same time it binds him more firmly to his family and to their historical conditioned sentiments, activities and beliefs. We are aware of this relationship in Thomas Wolfe's own life and in his experience as recorded in his novels. The novels are the record of a hero who is carried out of the narrow reaches of the hill country of the South to the large cities of the North and eventually away to Europe only to find that his experience binds him ever closer to his native soil, to America, and to the wonderful and giant people who inhabited his youth.

Thus, we are not surprised to find that the entire tone of Wolfe's first novel is larger than life. Gant, for instance, is compared in metaphor with Zeus, Thor and the Lion of Judah. He is given Ulyssian characteristics and called a far wanderer and he is frequently connected in thought with Gargantua from whom it would seem he draws his name. Eliza is also more than a person. She is a class and represents all the insane niggardliness, the myth of hoarding that abounds in this world, and her name likewise represents her class for her maiden name is Pentland, (pent-in-land: an isolated place.)

Through these mythic characters Wolfe creates a certain unity in his novel. He reported to Mrs. Roberts that his first editor Maxwell Perkins commented before the publication of Look Homeward, Angel that: "...the book was new and original and because of its form could have no formal and orthodox unity, but that what unity it did have came from the strange wild people -- the family -- it wrote about as seen through the eyes of a strange wild boy."  

The purpose of creating a mythic story by encumbering real experience with all that it suggests to a dramatic fancy is not only to satisfy Wolfe that he understands his own experience on a universal level but also it is used by him to teach others and thus it becomes a vehicle for his social comment.

Wolfe's intention in this regard becomes apparent not only through his own statements but also through his actions. For instance, he took the title Look Homeward, Angel from line 163 of the poem Lycidas by John Milton. A note attached to the poem in the 1645 edition explains the purpose of the poem and it also explains its connection with Wolfe. "In this Monody the Author bewails a learned Friend unfortunately drown'd in the Passage from Chester on the Irish Sea, 1637. And by occasion foretells the ruin of our corrupted Clergy then in their height."  


has taken a real experience and passing it through his own creative imagination he has made it into a social comment.

The same intention is reinforced by another comparison which Wolfe has drawn between his book and Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*. We can hardly ignore the implication since Swift has also made a comment on society by allowing his own experience to pass through the creative power of his own dramatic fancy.

I have attempted in this chapter to illustrate the intention of Wolfe as a writer. In the review of the critics in the first chapter, we have seen that no single critic has understood the breadth and the scope of Wolfe's intention. Acutely conscious of the dichotomy which exists in life, Wolfe had a clear vision of his role as a novelist. He faced a task which recognized and tried to interpret the complexity of American life and the richness of American tradition along-side its comparatively chaotic and diffuse culture. He realized that his was not the formal art of the novelist, that plot-making was not in harmony with the vastness and depth of his conception of life. In the next chapter, I shall attempt to explain how Wolfe wove all his varied intentions into the fabric of one novel.
CHAPTER III

A THEORY OF WOLFE'S PRINCIPAL STRUCTURING DEVICE;
INFLUENCES SHAPING HIS AESTHETIC

The problem to be explored in this chapter is the method that Wolfe used to structure his comprehensive view of life within the broad limits historically allowed by the aesthetic of the novel. Wolfe, as we have seen, conceived this as an enormous task. Whether he was successful in giving an acceptable form to Look Homeward, Angel is a debatable point. I am not prepared to pass judgment, but I should like to present a theory of his principal structuring device, a device which, I think lies at the very heart of Look Homeward, Angel. This device arose from influences at work in his formation as a writer. My purpose in this chapter, then, is to present that theory and to demonstrate its probable genesis.

This principle of form which I propose analysing will explain at least in part the dilemma created by the opposing views of critics I have mentioned. These critics have all made statements which are, to some extent, valid. They were adding pieces to a gigantic jigsaw puzzle which was taking shape but which still did not have the all-encompassing frame or totality of view which made sense. The question remained: How had Wolfe used all these seemingly contradictory themes and images and still maintained a sense of unity and reality?
To me, the secret seemed to lie in the way in which these contradictory elements were being used or placed within the novel. Examination revealed that the close proximity of opposite forces was, in fact, deliberate and created a principle of juxtaposition through which Wolfe created a kind of tension which he felt was an imitation of life itself. This principle of juxtaposition pervades the entire novel: characters, themes, episodes, images, metaphors and, to a large extent, even the chapters, paragraphs and the sentences themselves. This principle is structural, binding every part to every other part. It is my contention that the principle of juxtaposition which I have found in Wolfe's first novel is form-giving - that is, it supplies a large controlling idea which determines the shape, content, style and scope of the novel.

To elaborate and explain this principle and the way it operates it will be necessary to examine the text very closely; but, before I do this, I should like to make a few remarks about the nature of this principle. It operates on the basis of "affirmation - negation", and therefore seems to be contradictory by nature. This, perhaps, is the reason why so many critics have been led to paradoxical conclusions concerning the form of Wolfe's first novel. In fact, however, this primary basis of structure, the principle of juxtaposition, operates in a simple manner. It is nothing more nor less than the continuing realization that one of the most outstanding sources of form in life, and thus in the imitation of life which is art, is that forces exist as opposites. Now this may be
merely a semantic problem. For example, we might say darkness does not exist, being just the absence of light. But as long as our language is structured in the way it is, and as long as language is the basis of the art form we call literature, then light and darkness, heat and cold, life and death, are opposing forces and are real for the purpose of our discussion.

It is interesting to trace Thomas Wolfe's concern with the operation of opposites on each other. According to Louis B. Rubin, Thomas Wolfe was a student of Professor Horace Williams at the University of North Carolina. Wolfe has admitted that Professor Williams was one of the three most important teachers during his student days. Professor Williams, a philosophy professor, was a Hegelian; and in a letter written to him by Wolfe in 1921 we find Wolfe complaining that the complexity of life confuses him. "Your words keep haunting me almost in my dreams. 'How can there be unity in the midst of everlasting change?' In a system where things forever pass and decay, what is there fixed, real, eternal?" Look Homeward, Angel is Wolfe's answer to his own question. He brings order out of chaos in his novel by balancing opposing forces: destiny with change; ritual living with fragmented disorder; economic security and saving with generous and even prodigal spending; the acquisition of property with the denial of ownership; health and life with disease and death; travelling and the desire for voyages, with a home and family living; life on the level of various social orders and life buried

1 The Letters of Thomas Wolfe, p. 18.
in the quiet knowledge of private and personal experiences and ideas.

It is not certain that the principle of juxtaposition which Wolfe initiated in *Look Homeward, Angel* is derived directly from the Hegelian teachings of Professor Williams. It may be that Hegel's dialectic, his thesis—antithesis—synthesis principle, is somehow at work here, but this is not the problem of my paper. It is beyond the scope of my analysis to substantiate the origin of the principle of juxtaposition, and I am well aware that there are other sources, particularly in the Romantic literary concepts which Wolfe encountered at Harvard when he was studying for his master's degree.

It is however important, I believe, to show certain similarities between Wolfe and Hegel, because it cannot be ignored that Wolfe came under its influence. One interesting similarity, for instance, can be seen in the fact that, with Hegel, one is never presented with a finished result; always there remains some further qualification to be made, some new perspective from which any idea must be viewed. For Hegel, qualification is the essence of truth and no idea has a fixed meaning, no form of understanding an eternal, unchanging validity. This vision of life, as I shall show, is typical of Wolfe.

Another view presented by Wolfe which runs through *Look Homeward, Angel* seems also to be related to Hegel's philosophy. We find in Hegel, for the first time, a thorough-going attempt
to view all philosophical problems and concepts, including
the concept of reason itself, in essentially historical
terms. For both Wolfe and Hegel the particular alone re-
quires understanding even though it cannot be fully under-
stood save as it is seen in its relations to everything else.
Historical consciousness then is extremely important for it
is the only way to grasp reality. The particular alone is
merely another abstraction and its only reality is in its
relationship to its total environment. Everything therefore
is in a process of "becoming" and only makes sense in terms
of "becoming". Nothing can be viewed as a substance or thing
in itself. I cannot help but think that this concept is
extremely important in any understanding of Wolfe's work. If
we view Wolfe from the point of view of Aristotle, desirous
of knowing and understanding the essence of things, we are
certain to be disappointed. If we view Wolfe's art in terms
of the principle of the beginning, middle, and the end we shall
also be disappointed. Just as Hegel's philosophy is concerned
with "change", so is Wolfe's art concerned with "change" and
every "change" means new developments. Every historical
process is "something new under the sun" and nothing is ever
precisely like anything before it. This does not mean, how-
ever, that there is an essential difference between each thing;
since things in themselves do not exist, they are, in fact,
looked upon as progressive development in which every stage
or "moment", as Hegel calls it, is viewed both as the neces-
sary consequence of its predecessor and as radically different
from it.
The third similarity between Hegel's and Wolfe's work lies in Hegel's concept of his dialectic. For dialectical opposition is characteristic of all valid thinking about reality for Hegel. Every thesis generates its own contradictory antithesis. And out of the conflict between these opposing forces a synthesis arises. Any contradiction or seeming contradiction therefore must be viewed as merely an abstract and hence imperfect description of a more inclusive and more concretely understood reality. In this sense Wolfe's juxtaposition of opposing forces is not looked upon merely as a tension which is lifelike but as a new understanding which is reached by holding in juxtaposition and looking at opposing forces simultaneously. Thus for Wolfe to see things in juxtaposition and in opposition to each other is to understand them in a new way. He saw all of us "as all the sums we have not counted"; and in his novel, his characters, the mood he creates, the episodes, the themes, the metaphors he uses, can all be considered sums. They are carefully worked out problems in addition. They are attempts to arrive at totals, not by adding indiscriminate, unrelated, and unbalanced things, but by first seeing relationships, especially opposites; and, by selection and addition, each is seen as adding something to the total, a total which is never complete. We are therefore not at all surprised to find Wolfe demonstrating in *Look Homeward, Angel* the view he expounded in a letter to John Wielock, "that fixity, the earth again, is a female principle" and operates in opposition to the male principle, "the pole of wandering". Further, as Mr. Hurt has pointed out, Wolfe balances the
northern United States against the southern; the artisan against the capitalist; the city-dweller against the villager. He contrasts time now, present, almost static, against time continuing from the past to the future, and this gives the historical consciousness which we have mentioned earlier. Everywhere we look in the novel, we find the juxtaposition of opposites, a complete list of which would be too long at this point in the thesis. It will perhaps be more meaningful to see all the opposing forces in operation and in juxtaposition as we move through our demonstration from the text.
PART II

THE DEMONSTRATION

INTRODUCTION

Beginning the demonstration of the principle of juxtaposition by a close reading of the text, I am immediately aware of certain divisions which have to be made. In Chapter IV, I shall consider how the principle I have outlined operates with the characters, not only in themselves, but also in the relationships existing between them. In Chapter V, I shall deal with the juxtaposition of controlling ideas or themes as they make themselves felt throughout the novel. Chapter VI will consider the device of juxtaposition insofar as it affects the figurative language which mirrors these controlling ideas and themes, and insofar as it concerns itself with the creation of mood, the placing of episodes and the arrangements of chapters.

After the conclusion a series of three appendices, A, B, C, appear. Their function is to carry on the work of the last three chapters, giving page numbers and times of recurrence in all the areas mentioned. This summarizing in the appendices will give further substantiation to the statements made in the body of the thesis.
CHAPTER IV

THE PRINCIPLE OF JUXTAPOSITION AT WORK IN THE DELINEATION OF CHARACTER

We saw in the second chapter how Maxwell Perkins, Wolfe's first editor, believed that a great deal of the unity in the novel came from "...the strange wild people -- the family -- it wrote about as seen through the eyes of a strange wild boy."¹ This chapter, therefore, deals with the use of juxtaposition in the creation of these "strange wild people".

I do not believe that there is any area of the novel which reflects the principle of juxtaposition better than does the creation of character, and the development of the relationship between characters. As the people of the novel move within the family circle or within the larger circle of society, they demonstrate certain themes or ideas. Character, therefore, is associated with a value system which is uniquely his, and it is our responsibility in this section to demonstrate that these characters and their value systems are placed in juxtaposition to each other. I will also attempt to show how various characteristics or values are placed side by side within a single character.

It is important to recognize that Wolfe does not order the episodes in Look Homeward, Angel in such a way as to cre-

ate a plot. Instead, everything Wolfe tells us, every episode, is designed to reveal something about one of the characters or the relationship between the characters. Invariably the relationship on any level is that opposites exist in juxtaposition.

For instance, in the case of Eliza, we are told through separate episodes which follow one another that she was so mean and stingy, that she allowed her son Eugene to cripple his feet by wearing second-hand shoes. But on the other hand in the next episode she is so generous that she continues to give room and board and even a sum of money to a poor Indian girl who is having a baby out of wedlock. The implication in the text is that if the reader really wants to understand Eliza he has to be able to see her as both stingy and generous at one and the same time.

Another illustration of the same kind of development is seen within the character of Gant. He is both a family man and a far wanderer. Thus episodes in the novel which picture Gant as the center of a wondrous family circle and as a man who leaves the family for an indefinite journey to the western United States, are placed side by side.

Later on in this section I shall explore how this same principle is at work in some of the other people in the novel but at the moment I would like to pursue the relationship between Eliza and Gant.

Mr. Hurt, the scholar who did the study of the sociological implication in Wolfe's work, has done the best job of
showing the relationship which exists between Gant and Eliza. I shall carry the study a little further, however, in order to reveal how the principle of juxtaposition operates on this level. To do this I shall have to start at the very beginning of the novel and see how the character of Gant is delineated.

We get our first glimpse of Gant through his father, Gilbert. Gilbert is not important to the novel since, after the first two pages, he is never mentioned again. In these two pages, however, we are given to understand that many of the things which we are going to meet in Gant were inherited from his father. This is the historical perspective which Wolfe never leaves out. Through Gilbert we learn of voyaging, profit, and the improvident consumption of food and liquor. These are all factors which play a major role in Gant’s life. Gilbert voyages from England where his last name is spelled Gaunt and comes to America where his name is changed to Gant. One might speculate that the Gaunt spelling reflects starving Europe and this is placed in juxtaposition to the American spelling which reflects the Gar-gant-uan plenty of North America. In any case, after Gilbert comes to America he wanders about fighting and gambling and living a reckless, penniless, and dangerous life until he settles down in Pennsylvania, a land of plenty, and marries a “rugged young widow with a tidy farm.”


plenty with poverty, the reckless, wandering life with stability and home, general chaos with order.

But Gilbert's life reflects another important factor which will be carried on in the lives of his offspring. It is suggested that he had a feeling for language and should have been an actor. This talent is thwarted and frustrated in Gilbert but he passes it on to Gant. This artistic sensitivity is seen in Gant's love of the "nobel rant of the theatre" and also in his desire to carve an angel's head in stone. But here again it is frustrated and is passed on to his son, Eugene.

The implication is that the artistic talent in both Gilbert and his son was frustrated because these men lived the ordinary life of a man in society and did not seek for the essential isolation which is necessary to bring this talent to its fruition. Thus one of the major themes of the book is the search for isolation on the part of Eugene which will allow this talent to blossom. Thus the artist's life is placed in juxtaposition with the lives of ordinary men. This buried life which Eugene seeks is seen as the result of the hunger and the search in both his father and his grandfather. Thus once again Wolfe places things in historical perspective.

Eugene's grandfather, we are told, suffers under "the harsh but honest tongue of his wife"; but when he dies, leaving five children and a mortgage, there is something that does not die, a strange and passionate desire, a hunger
for voyages which is related to the frustration of his artistic inspiration. Gant is left with his father's unrest and thirst for voyages. This "pole of wandering" which Wolfe describes as a masculine thing, is contrasted with the female principle of fixity. Gant is carried by this desire out of the North into the South and this compulsion is referred to as "hunger burning in darkened eyes". These same words are also used to connote Gant's artistic desire. He wanted to rise above ordinary life, to create, to succeed as an artisan, to find a place, to be loved, to gain wealth. We are told that Gant, "... wanted, more than anything in the world, to carve delicately with a chisel. He wanted to wreak something dark and unspeakable in him into cold stone. He wanted to carve an angel's head." This statement of Gant's desire is followed directly with a statement about the frustration of this desire. "He never found it. He never learned to carve an angel's head." Thus the device of juxtaposition is at work again.

All of this is part of the motif of the quest. Already in this thesis we have seen how Mr. Rubin reveals this theme of the quest for an earthly paradise and also recognizes the theme of alienation or the lost paradise. In this theme the hero feels like a stranger on the earth and suffers a haunting

4 The Letters of Thomas Wolfe, p. 317.
6 Ibid., p. 4.
7 Ibid., p. 4.
and profound feeling of not belonging. Mr. Rubin, however, did not see how these opposite themes of the quest for an earthly paradise and the loss of paradise are juxtaposed and thus fit into the larger pattern which I am attempting to explore.

Returning to Oliver Gant's personal history, the last line on page four of the novel finds him "reeling down across the continent into the Reconstruction South". When the pattern of wandering is finished, he settles down, sets up a business in tombstones, wins a good name for himself and gets married. Soon, however, the opposing forces are at work and within eighteen months he is a "howling maniac again". 8 "So all was gone again - Cynthia, the shop, the hard-bought praise of sobriety, the angel's head...Alone and lost again, having found neither order nor establishment in the world, and with the earth cut away from his feet, Oliver Gant resumed his aimless drift along the continent." 9 His health ruined from drinking, he believed he was dying of tuberculosis. Once again the opposing forces are at work, and hope takes over from despair. Once more his eyes "darkened again as they had in his youth" and he turned to the fortress of the hills hoping that he might find in them isolation, a new life, and recovered health.

At the bottom of page five in the text, another juxtaposition of opposites begins to take shape. Gant is travel-


9 Ibid., p. 5.
ling into the South. As he stares out of the window he sees "...the great raw land so sparsely tilled by the futile and occasional little farms," and he remembers "...the great barns of Pennsylvania, the ripe bending of golden grain, the plenty, the order, the clean thrift of the people." Here is the beginning of the juxtaposition between the northern part of the United States and the South. Strangely enough although Wolfe was born and raised in the South, his sympathy clearly lies with the North. This does not mean, however, that Wolfe suggests in any way that either North or South is not American. His mind clearly recognizes in this situation as in all others that the conflict of opposites does not place either side outside the total reality. Opposite realities exist and somehow synthesize into new orders and new forms even while they remain separate and in conflict. This is essentially the ordering power behind Wolfe's view of the world.

One of the central conflicts in the book begins to emerge on page eight when Eliza Pentland meets Oliver Gant. They are to be married and the last of their six offspring to reach majority, Eugene, is the person from whose point of view most of the story is told.

I have shown in a previous chapter how Lester E. Hurt in his doctoral dissertation developed his concept of unity in Wolfe's work through the themes which center around the characters of Gant and Eliza. There is no doubt that such

11 Ibid., p. 6.
themes and such continuity exist, especially concerning the social implications which are developed by Wolfe. However, I have also shown how Larry Rubin in his dissertation developed Eugene as the center of the themes which give structure to the work as he saw it, especially concerning the personal and non-social implications developed by Wolfe. The important point is that both these men saw only half the picture. They were right as far as they went but in any total picture one must understand the relationship between Eugene and his parents. He is not only a synthesis of their characteristics but he is more, he is separate, he is an individual, and in this sense he is opposed to them. Eugene develops the need for a private life, the buried life as he calls it. It is personal, lonely and introverted and this is in opposition to both Eliza and Gant since they are essentially extroverts and operate in relationship to society. Eugene develops early a lyrical and artistic world of his own which is based on fantasy. However, the development of this conflict between Eugene and his parents and the juxtaposition of the essential ways in which they operate must be left until later. At the present we should return to Gant and Eliza and see how they are an example of the device of juxtaposition in character delineation.

The most important aspect of the conflict between these two characters centers upon the difference of their viewpoint on economic matters. Eliza, like the other members of the Pentland family, came out of the Civil War with "an insane niggardliness, and insatiant love of property". 12

12 Ibid., p. 12.
She talks about property with a strange meditative hunger. She sees the town as an enormous blue-print and her head is stuffed with figures and estimates. She knows everyone who owns a lot, who sold it, the sale price, the real value, the future value, and everything else to be known about it. Eliza is a capitalist; she invests money in real estate and makes a profit with her quick tongue and ability to bargain. Thus, an action which becomes symbolic of her, and which Wolfe refers to many times, is "pursing her lips". Her family, the Pentlands, are associated with her in her hunger for money-making and profit. Her brothers make a fortune in the lumber business. Their mannerisms, however, are not expansive. Symbolically the Pentlands are always whittling away at pieces of wood or paring their fingernails. They are always cutting away at things; they use stubs of pencils and do their figuring on the backs of old envelopes.

On the other hand Gant is an artisan. He talks and works with his hands constantly in motion. They become a symbol for us. They represent Gant's side of the conflict. They are strong, powerfully built hands which represent honest toil, craftsmanship, and later on they also come to represent the productivity of the farmer. As an image it is used in direct juxtaposition to the pursed lips which represent the capitalist world of Eliza. These symbols leave no doubt in the mind of the reader as to where Wolfe's sympathy lies.

Gant talks in shouts. He thunders magnificently. A tide of rhetoric and the noble rant of the theatre is always
on his tongue. The Pentlands talk in crafty "bird-like winks and nods". As for Eliza, she "liked to take her time and come to the point after interminable divagation down all the lane ends of memory and overtones, feasting on the golden pageant of all she had ever said, done, felt, thought, seen, or replied, with egocentric delight".13

Gant abhorred the idea of owning property for a profit, He said, "all the property I need is eight feet of earth to be buried in".14 For a short time he went into the lumber business with Eliza's brother, but he was miserable and failed at it. He made his living carving graceful words and images in stone and not by tearing away at his nails or at the stub of a pencil while he tried to figure out how he could sell something at a profit:

And as they peeled, or pared or whittled, their talk slid from its rude jocularity to death and burial: they drawled monotonously, with evil hunger, their gossip of destiny, and of men only newly lying in the earth. And as their talk wore on, and Gant heard the spectre moan of the wind, he was entombed in loss and darkness, and his soul plunged downward in the pit of night, for he saw that he must die a stranger - that all, all but these triumphant Pentlands who banqueted on death - must die.

And like a man who is perishing in the polar night he thought of the rich meadows of his youth; the corn, the plum tree and ripe grain.15

As the Pentlands, and, particularly Eliza, banquet on death, so Gant feasts on life and even the soil yields

---

14 Ibid., p. 11.
15 Ibid., p. 13.
abundant harvest in response to his powerful hands. "Wherever his great hands touched the earth it grew fruitful for him and whatever he touched in the rich fortress of his soul sprang into golden life; as the years passed, the fruit trees – the peach, the plum, the cherry, the apple grew great and bent beneath their clusters."\(^{16}\)

Thus in this way Gant not only represents the artisan as a stone cutter but the farmer as well in the terrible conflict with the Pentlandian profit seekers who only exploit the earth.

Chapter II of the novel continues Gant's and Eliza's character delineation. An equal number of paragraphs is devoted to each as the conflict deepens. "From the first, deeper than love, deeper than hate, an obscure and final warfare was being waged between them."\(^{17}\) Gant built Eliza a house:

For him the house was a picture of his soul, the garment of his will... with his great hands he had laid the foundations, burrowed out great musty cellars in the earth, and sheeted the tall sides over with smooth trowellings of warm brown plaster. He had very little money, but his strange house grew to the rich molding of his fantasy... but for Eliza it was a piece of property, whose value she shrewdly appraised, a beginning for her hoard.\(^{18}\)

Not only did Eliza consider this house a piece of property, which is a strange position for a woman and mother to take, but Wolfe seems to emphasize the warping effect of the terri-


\(^{17}\) Ibid., p. 16.

\(^{18}\) Ibid., p. 14.
ble drive for property and money which was central to her existence. He reports her as saying, "I wish I was a man", and Wolfe describes her as she talks of owning land as using "a curiously masculine gesture of the hand", or again, "the loose masculine gesture", and still further she becomes "the woman of property, who was like a man". Throughout the novel we see how this powerful and compulsive passion for profit destroys all that is natural, feminine and right in Eliza, and how she, in turn, twisted beyond belief out of the natural order, destroys all the peace, harmony and unity in her family.

The fierce play of opposing forces represented in Gant and Eliza continues, "recalling the savage strife between them, and the great submerged struggle beneath, founded upon the hatred and love of property." Eliza is contrasted with Gant because of her "infinite composure", her "tremendous patience", her "prophetic brooding instinct", and her "Buddhistic complacency". She waited, for destiny was with her: "she was being shaped to a purpose", "a great star burned across her vision", "she saw in the future, freedom that she had never known, possession and power and wealth". Gant, however, lives in the present with "all his Rabelaisian excess, eating, drinking and loving". In direct juxta-

20 Ibid., p. 18.
21 Ibid., p. 17.
22 Ibid., p. 18.
23 Ibid., p. 18.
position to Eliza's "destiny" Gant thought of his "wasted chances... the appalling fixation of his whole life upon a series of accidents... the enormous tragedy of accidents hung like a grey cloud over his life." 24 From this it can be seen that destiny associated with the inevitable event is clearly connected with Eliza as a character, and chance accident is associated with Gant.

Another means of using the principle of juxtaposition and also of delineating and developing character, especially that of Eliza and Gant, is found in the beginning of chapter five. Here a discussion about Eliza's and Gant's two oldest children, Daisy and Steve, develops. It is not difficult to see how Daisy and Steve are really extensions of Eliza and Gant because, as characters in the book, they play no independent and recognizable parts as individuals. They are placed in conscious comparison and juxtaposition to each other. Daisy represents the best features in Eliza's character and Steve, the worst of Gant's. Daisy is the picture of feminity which offsets the masculine side of Eliza's character. She is described as "Daisyish", "maidenly", "timid", "sensitive", and "industrious". 25 Steve, on the other hand, was a poor student and was thrashed for truancy and insubordination. Out of overgrown vanity he boasts wildly and turns to drunkenness and minor forgery. "Gant recognized perhaps most of his son's vices as his own; there was little, however,

25 Ibid., pp. 36-37/
of his redeeming qualities." 26

Another example of the use of his pattern of juxtaposing Gant's and Eliza's children is seen in Chapter ten where Ben and Luke are contrasted. Ben was sullen, defiant and alone. He lived in a private world of his own heart and came and went from the brawling house and was unremembered like a phantom. He had Eliza's desire for financial independence but he also shared Gant's generosity. And with his father's stride, his long thin shoulders, bent prematurely by the weight of the heavy newspaper bag, through which he was financially independent, he roamed pathetically, hungrily, Gantian. Ben is the personification of Gant's tragic fault. He is the personification of Gant's desire to carve the angel's head. Thus the angel to whom he turns characteristically and to whom he talks over his shoulder becomes a symbol for Ben. He walks alone in the darkness, while death and dark angels hover. "Ben loped through the streets, or prowled softly and restlessly about the house, his dark angel wept, but no one else saw, and no one knew. He was a stranger, and as he sought through the house, he was always aprowl to find some entrance into life, some secret undiscovered door — a stone, a leaf, — that might admit him into light and fellowship." 27

As with Gant, Ben's passion for home was fundamental and he had a deep scowling affection for all the members of his family. He never forgot their birthdays. He always placed

27 Ibid., p. 93.
some gift, small and inexpensive, selected with the most discriminating taste where they might find it. In that clamorous household his sullen and continued quiet was like some soothing opiate. With quiet authority, with white-handed skill, he sought out and repaired, joining with delicate carpentry old broken things, prying quietly about short-circuited wires or a defective socket. In this way Ben represents all that is most idealistic in Gant, and therefore it is only logical that as these characteristics are destroyed in Gant through his continuous and bitter battle with Eliza, so Ben too, dies as a result of this terrible conflict.

Placed in juxtaposition with Ben is his brother, Luke. In the same chapter Luke is described as the perfect salesman. He has Gant's extreme exuberance and vitality. He has Gant's wagging and witty tongue and he hurls all his bursting energy into an insane extroversion. He lives absolutely in the event; there is in him no secret place, nothing withheld and guarded - he has an instinctive horror of all loneliness. He wants above all else to be esteemed and liked by the world. He has Eliza's concern for the financial and he has her ability to succeed at bargaining and making a profit. This trait, however, is made more perfect by being blended with Gant's generosity. He is not niggardly or selfish, and he does not believe in the terrible mythology of hoarding. Eliza bought a car which she would neither use nor sell, even at a profit. Luke was furious that she hoarded it and he begged her either to use the car or to sell it. It is ironical to think that Luke is described as looking like an angel, but he has no quiet angel over his
shoulder such as Ben possesses.

We have seen how Gant's children are juxtaposed against each other. Yet each contains within himself a subtle combination of the characteristics belonging to both Gant and Eliza.

Gant, Ben and Eugene are all aware of the tragic loneliness of life that gives to them a sense of futility and frustration. It leaves them restless and leaves in them a hunger for something greater and better. Eugene is the only one, however, who accepts isolation, indeed seeks isolation and greater loneliness since he is the only one who can use it and fill it with his fantasy. He strives for the buried life since he believes that the carving of the angel's head and the search for all that is good, is going to come to fruition in him.

Eugene understood that men were forever strangers to one another, that no one ever comes really to know anyone. That imprisoned in the dark womb of our mother we come to life without having seen her face, that we are given to her arms a stranger, and, that caught in that insoluble prison of being, we escape it never, no matter what arms may clasp us, what mouth may kiss us, what heart may warm us. 28 Eugene understands that this is a necessary part of the life of the artist and craftsman.

Eliza, Helen and Luke, however, never feel this desire for isolation. They seem content to accept life, and make the most of it. They are outgoing and more involved in everyday society. They need the companionship of others; they have no private world in which to live. In Look Homeward, Angel, 28 Thomas Wolfe, Look Homeward, Angel, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1957, p. 31.
therefore, there is an essential conflict and a juxtaposition of these two views of life which are reflected in the whole behaviour pattern of the characters: introversion versus extroversion. Eugene feels the power of both. Although he is essentially an introvert, desirous of the buried life, he feels a tremendous compulsion to be well-liked and to be accepted. He wants to be loved. He wants wealth and he wants to be well thought of by the people in his own town.

As we have seen, Gant and Eliza are themselves a combination of opposed characteristics. Wolfe says of Gant that his deep, hungry spirit of quest belongs to a man who has the greatest love of order and the most pious regard for ritual. Even Gant's daily tirades of abuse are woven into the pattern. Eliza, on the other hand, who is supposed to be the practical, daily person, is animated by one all-mastering desire for possession, and is possessed in turn by that sprawling blot of chaos which surrounds her. She is surrounded with bottles, pieces of paper, and old scraps of string. About Gant, Wolfe says that he has the passion of a true wanderer, but he wanders from a fixed point. He needed the order and dependence of a home — he is intensely a family man; the clustered warmth and strength of his family about him is life. On the other hand, Eliza has none of the instincts of a mother. She prepares everything in her home for the benefit of strangers and boarders and, even when she travels, she talks in terms of her boarding-house and making money. She says of her trip to St. Louis, I'll simply get me a good big house and drum up a trade with the Altmont people who are going. Seeing herself not as a
home-maker but as a boarding-house keeper, she justifies anything that brings her in money.

Thus Wolfe builds his characters through the principle of juxtaposition. Each character is placed in contrast with another. Each characteristic within a character is placed beside another which is its opposite. In order to understand Wolfe's character development and its delineation one must be able to hold opposing forces in his mind simultaneously and see that the result is more than mere addition. Something new has come into existence, something greater than opposites added together. A synthesis is at work which in many cases is felt intuitively; yet it is real and intact and is grasped by the reader on a non-verbal level. It is an extension beyond words. The juxtaposition itself is something new which adds to the total a new dimension. It is this dimension growing out of juxtaposition which is its greatest reason for existence as a unifying principle. Juxtaposition is the springboard by and from which the mind can leap into this new dimension. Thus Wolfe's characterization constantly grows, making each new part an element of something which already exists. There is no really logical end to this process from the point of view either of the characters or of the story. But, although nothing is ever complete, everything is aimed at a total view of life which the reader grasps by implication.
CHAPTER V

THE PRINCIPLE OF JUXTAPOSITION AT WORK IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF THEMES

A number of controlling ideas or themes run through Look Homeward, Angel. Critics and scholars have commented at length upon many of these as we shall see later. The contribution which I hope to make in this chapter is to show the relationship which exists between these themes. It is my belief that the principle of juxtaposition operates on this level in a unique way.

In the second chapter dealing with Wolfe's intention as a writer, it was seen that he had two important and contrary themes in mind when he planned the novel. He told Mrs. Roberts that he was going to write about "a secret life", "an essential isolation" and "a creative solitude." On the other hand, "just subordinate" to this he had in mind a story about a desperate and bitter struggle between a man and his wife.

In my fourth chapter dealing with character analysis, we have seen that the man and his wife in terrible conflict are Eliza and Gant. We have seen, moreover, that they are not just personalities but that they represent whole value systems in conflict. Also involved in this struggle, Eugene, as we have seen, represents the artist in search of essential isolation. Like his parents, Eugene is not presented in the novel as a unique personality but as "a powerful creative
element trying to work its way towards an essential isolation.\(^1\)

Similar to yet distinct from other members of his family, he represents a synthesis of the basic value systems which are placed in juxtaposition and personified in Eliza and Gant.

Because of these intentions, Wolfe does everything in his power to make his characters mythic and symbolic. It is a fundamental error to see these characters as autobiographically synonymous with Wolfe himself and his parents. There is no doubt that these characters are generated from this source; but, there is no reason to assume that they are identical.

This is an important concept to grasp since, in this chapter, I am going to discuss the controlling ideas which these characters represent. These controlling ideas or value systems which run through the entire novel can be considered themes. And these themes pair off in opposites which are placed in juxtaposition to each other. The first two from which all the others emerge have already been mentioned: they are the buried life, a search for a creative introversion, as seen in juxtaposition with "the savage glare of an unbalanced, nervous, brawling family group;... society, and the barbarous invasions of the world."\(^2\)

Out of this basic division come several subsidiary con-

---


2 Thomas Wolfe, *Writing is My Life; The Novelist Under Fire*, *op. cit.*, p. 68.
trolling ideas which are all related to the first two.

For instance, we can see how the "theme of the lost paradise" and the quest for an earthly one burgeon out from the "theme of the buried life." Larry Rubin has done an admirable study in exploring these themes and relating them to the "theme of alienation." Mr. Hurt, on the other hand, has provided us with an excellent study which delineates the sociological themes: capitalist versus craftsmen and farmer, South versus North in the United States, village cultures versus city cultures. Irving Halperin has also demonstrated a whole group of themes which belong to the maturing life of the artist, themes which he classifies in chapters entitled "Centripetal" and "Centrifugal." Mr. Albrecht is also in agreement with my basic premise about the positioning of themes since, in his research, he has clearly established that the idea of time as permanent is placed beside the idea of time considered as a state of flux. I could not possibly recapitulate all the work that these men have done since their work represents years of labour and hundreds of pages of manuscript. The important thesis which I should like to


6 W. P. Albrecht, "Time As Unity in Thomas Wolfe", in Richard Walser, editor, op. cit.
demonstrate, however, is that all their work points to a deeper unifying principle which I have isolated.

But even these critics have not exhausted the entire field of thematic structure. There are subordinate themes in individual novels which have gone unnoticed since the major exegetical work on Wolfe has been concerned with the entire tetralogy as a single unit. I shall therefore continue the search for controlling ideas in *Look Homeward, Angel* and point out their relationship to each other.

On the first page of the novel, it is already apparent that Wolfe is going to place contrasted and opposite ideas side by side. In the first paragraph the concept of destiny is placed beside the concept of change. This is not accidental, since it happens again and again in the novel. The idea of destiny here is the same as in other places in the novel; it is the concept of necessity, that which happens because it cannot be otherwise. This determined behaviour "is touched by that dark miracle of chance which makes new magic in this empty world."[7] The idea of chance as it is used here is equivalent to man's behaviour shaped by accidents. This juxtaposing of fortuitous and determined behaviour is mirrored through the characters in the novel. Eliza dwells on destiny, seeing things foretold in the stars, waiting for the inevitable; Gant, on the other hand, sees his whole life as the product of accident and chance. Their son

---

Eugene, the protagonist in the story, sees his life as the fusion of these two strong beliefs. He sees that "beyond all misuse, waste, pain, tragedy, death, confusion, unswerving necessity" is part of his existence. He believes that "not a sparrow fell through the air but that its repercussion acted on his life, and the lonely light that fell upon the viscous and interminable seas at dawn awoke sea-changes washing life to him." On the other hand, he believes that he is a fanatical zealot in the religion of chance. He tells us that chance is the only reality, but he believes that from all the chaos of accident the inevitable event comes at the inexorable moment to add to the sum of his life. Eugene, therefore, feels that he understands both the power of accident and the necessity of the compellingly inevitable event and he is certain that both play a role in his life. His view is a synthesis of those held by his mother and his father.

The idea of synthesis is an important one in this novel, and on the first page Wolfe gives us a hint of this fact. He says that "man is all the sums he has not counted". This means, as the context of the paragraph clearly shows, that man is not only the synthesis of all his own experience but also the sum of all the experience of all men. Thus Wolfe continues, "we see begin in Crete four thousand years ago the


9 Ibid., p. 160.
love that ended yesterday in Texas.\textsuperscript{10} I do not think we can ignore the implication in this statement. This is a reflection of that historical consciousness which I mentioned in my third chapter. It is the same as the concept which was held by Hegel that says that everything is in a state of continuous development. There is no real beginning or end to anything since all things are always in the condition of becoming something else. Even a man's life is only a moment in the continuous flow.

I do not believe, however, that Wolfe subscribed to this view entirely. He seems perfectly aware that life is like a line. It can be looked at as continuous or as an infinite number of points, this latter view being illustrated through the episodic structure of \textit{Look Homeward, Angel}. For Wolfe both views are valid as far as they go but the truth lies beyond. Essential to both views however, is Wolfe's concept of time as it has been explored by Albrecht. It is the binding force which unites yesterday to today; but it is also the dividing force which separates one experience from another. Another paradox which confronts us when we consider this concept of time results because of the clash between the ideas of fixity and change. Time and movement are essentially bound to fixity and change and for Wolfe's hero, Eugene:

\begin{quote}...
...it is this that awed him -- the weird combination of fixity and change, the terrible moment of immobility stamped with eternity in which passing life at great speed, both the observer and the observed seemed frozen in time. There was one moment of timeless suspension when the land did not move, the
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{10} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 3.
train did not move, the slattern in the
doorway did not move. His sense of unreality
came from time and movement, from imaging the
woman, when the train passed, as walking back
into the house, lifting a kettle from the
hearth embers.11

Thus time is dualistic. Wolfe talks about time as "a
procession of the years" or as "the march of time" and time
in a sense of the continuous and the historical. But he
recognizes the difficulty in viewing life and time as a con-
tinuous action. For the sake of man's imagination and for
the sake of his understanding, time has to be frozen at
least long enough to be studied, or related to the imagi-
nation. Thus Wolfe talks about time in these words:

...it was as if God had lifted his baton
sharply above the endless orchestration of
the seas, and the eternal movement had
stopped, suspended in the timeless archi-
tecture of the absolute. For like those
motion pictures that describe the movements
of a swimmer making a dive, or a horse taking
a hedge — movement is petrified suddenly in
mid-air, the inexorable completion of an act
is arrested.12

I am not as much interested in the difference in the
attitudes which Wolfe takes toward time as I am in the fact
that these attitudes are placed in metaphoric juxtaposition
to each other, and that they are a prologue to another pair
of opposites which Wolfe places side by side. He places the
concept of time as continuous and historical on the side of
fantasy. Wolfe explains that it was out of these arrested

11 Thomas Wolfe, Look Homeward, Angel, New York:
Charles Scribner's Sons, 1957, p. 159

12 Thomas Wolfe, Look Homeward, Angel, New York:
Charles Scribner's Sons, 1957, p. 159.
moments, out of these frozen moments of time, that Eugene created his fantasy: "...from imaging the woman, when the train passed, as walking back into the house, lifting a kettle from the hearth embers." Thus, too, the ideas contained in the words "reality" and "fantasy" are juxtaposed.

The concept that we get by implication from Wolfe's work and from his explicit statements about the nature of fiction is that reality per se is so continuous, changing, and "becoming" that it is incomprehensible except as it is reflected through the creative imagination of fantasy which stops it, arranges it and gives it meaning. It is understood that this process leads towards truth, not away from it. This concept is not new with Wolfe; it is related to a great number of beliefs and practices of creative artists. Coleridge believed it. Swift used it in Gulliver's Travels. Milton used it in his elegy, Lycidas. Santayana defines myth in terms of it. And I suppose that anyone who believes that the fine arts reflect essential truths concerning the universe would have, in some way, to subscribe to this idea. Thus, as Wolfe has told us, he hoped "to show in each type the universal, in the one, the many."14

In summary, the artist's life of the imagination in solitude and the individual's existence within the sociological units of family and society are the basic themes placed in juxtaposition. Subsidiary to these are: the vague

---


14 The Letters of Thomas Wolfe, p. 37.
recollection of "a lost paradise" and the present quest for "an earthly paradise" to take its place; the sentiment of being a stranger in the world, and the search for love wealth and fame; the forces which carry from home the protagonist in his process of maturing, and those which draw him homeward again; the acquisition of wealth and property (by those who want to own the earth) and the desire to create as a craftsman and use the earth as a farmer (those who want to explore the earth); and finally, transcending all barriers, the concept of the permanence of time and that of its fluidity. I have attempted to show in this chapter how this balancing of themes demonstrates a carefully conceived juxtaposition which is the very basis of Wolfe's structure.
CHAPTER VI
THE PRINCIPLE OF JUXTAPOSITION AT WORK IN THE FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

There is a close relationship between this present chapter, which deals with the principle of juxtaposition as it is mirrored in the novel's figurative language, and my preceding chapter which dealt with the relationship between themes. The images, symbols and metaphoric patterns demonstrate and elaborate upon the themes and thus act as a reinforcing agent to the controlling ideas.

For instance, in the prose poem which introduces Look Homeward, Angel, the first image cluster which is repeated many times in the novel is contained in the words "... a stone, a leaf, an unfound door; of a stone, a leaf, a door. And all the forgotten faces." Here one must turn to the theme of the permanence and the fluidity of time to get an adequate explanation of this image cluster. The stone represents permanence, the leaf transience, and the door represents the way to understanding the paradox created between these two. This is made clear by other statements Wolfe has made concerning time: "There is the time of rivers, mountains, oceans and the earth; a kind of eternal and unchanging universe of time against which would be projected the transience of man's life, the bitter briefness of his day."¹

¹ The Letters of Thomas Wolfe, p. 65

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
The best image of Wolfe's dualistic outlook on time is contained in the image of the river because the river is a symbol for both kinds of time—permanent and transient. The river is eternal, yet never do we step into the same river twice.

Wolfe on many occasions talks about "the everlasting earth", often measuring it against the transience of human life. The fundamental problem, which he sees and which for him is never resolved, is that a stone, so imperfect, remains, while the leaf, so perfect, must die. Thus one is always searching for the door which will give access to the solution of this mystery.

For Wolfe, at least part of the answer was contained in the Platonic and Wordsworthian notions of pre-existence. The earth is an incommunicable prison to which we come "trailing clouds of glory" and upon which we live as if lost; "Remembering speechlessly, we seek the great forgotten language, the lost lane end into heaven, a stone, a leaf, an unfound door."² A key term in this last statement is "Remembering" since, for Wolfe, it is through memory that we reconstruct in our creative imagination the meaning behind "all the forgotten faces." Thus the theme of the quest for love and understanding and the earthly paradise is a direct result of the lost heavenly paradise we experienced before our birth. This quest for love is doomed, however, because Wolfe believes that each of us remains "forever a stranger and alone."³ The image

---


³ Ibid., (Introductory prose poem)
of being lost, or alone, or a stranger, or searching for a
door, a resolution of the essential paradox between life and
the inanimate universe is a fundamental part of the imagery
belonging to Look Homeward, Angel. All of these images are
as juxtaposed as the themes which they represent. All of
them belong to the first basic group which revolves around
the life of the artist and his search for the buried life.

In the first paragraph of the text, however, Wolfe
makes another important juxtaposition of images which moves
us into the realm of figures relating to the sociological
themes. The line reads: "....over the proud coral cry of
the cock and the soft stone smile of an angel."4 Here the
sounds of the consonants are set in opposition. The alliter­
ating hard "c" sounds are juxtaposed with the soft "s" sounds.
Further, the image of the "proud coral cry of the cock",
positioned as it is beside the "soft stone smile of an angel",
suggests another fundamental problem in one of the principal
themes of the novel. We can see that the "coral cry of the
cock" combines a core of hard, unremitting reality, sharp
as coral, which like Eliza excludes dreaming and fantasy,
and wakes man with the cry of the cock to the busy world of
commerce and finance. On the other hand, the "soft stone
smile of an angel" is symbolic of Gant's desire to carry an
angel's head. This is his dream and his cherished hope. The
angel—or angel's head—is a multifoliate image which, in all

4 Thomas Wolfe, Look Homeward, Angel, New York:
Charles Scribner's Sons, 1937. p. 5.
its functions, represents the aspirations of the artist. With Ben, the angel represents his isolation and his loneliness; with Gant, it represents his desire to carve in stone, to create. For Eugene, the angel represents both since it is through isolation that he will be able to create.

Eugene's life is a combination of two other worlds. Although he leans heavily towards the world of fantasy, which is his father's, he is forced to live in his mother's world of acquisition. Thus his life becomes a demonstration of the juxtaposition of fantasy and reality.

Another metaphor which demonstrates juxtaposition even on the first page of the novel is expressed in the words "the seed of our destruction will blossom in the desert, the alexin of our cure grows by a mountain rock." In one sentence, then, destruction and cure are placed side by side; and these are equated metaphorically with "desert" and with "mountains."

This same sentence appears again on p. 160 of the novel and the image recurs many times throughout the work. For instance, as the sick Gant in his journey southward approaches the mountains, he feels their salutary effect: "...below him, a mountain stream foamed down its rocky bed...there were new lands. His heart lifted." On the other hand, in the opening prose poem, we saw how the waste of loss was connected to the "hot mazes" and how the earth was pictured as an "unbright cinder".

Another metaphorical pattern which demonstrates juxtaposition can be seen in the images concerned with the changing

6 Ibid., p. 7.
seasons. Death and disease are connected with the "bitter and lonely winter", whereas health is paralleled with the spring: "...and then the marvelous hill spring came, green golden, with brief spurting winds the magic and fragrance of the blossoms, warm gusts of balsam. The great wound in Oliver began to heal." Thus the juxtaposed metaphoric patterns dealing with the seasons and the topography of the country are consistent throughout the book and they support the character delineation and the thematic structure of the novel.

Images of light and of darkness, of color and of animals are abundant and they follow a pattern of connotation which fits easily into the entire structure of the book. Sentences like the following are a good example: "...he breathed over them all, his hot lion breath of desire and fury: when he was drunk, her white pursed face, and all the slow octopol movements of her temper stirred him to red madness." Here the wild and untamed fury of the king of beasts associated with Gant is directly contrasted with the slow, grasping, crushing and encircling power of the octopus which is linked by metaphor to Eliza. White is used throughout the novel in union with Eliza and as such it suggests a lack of color, a pale almost bloodless state recalling the death imagery which is associated with her. Gant, on the other hand, is paralleled, even in this sentence, with "red

8 Ibid., p. 15.
madness." On page 16 of the text we find more metaphors associated with him; "stained with the rich dyes" and with color in contrast to Eliza's bleak whiteness.

Gant is also an artisan and is associated with metaphors which deal with cloth making. Wolfe describes Gant's house and garden as "hung in a dense fabric", and speaks of "the velvet leafed nasturtium", the flowers "slashed with a hundred tawny dyes". The house is also the "garment of his will" and a "rich checkered texture". Continuing images of Gant's hands are symbolic of his role as the farmer and the artisan, whereas Eliza's "pursed lips" form a continuing image of her role as a materialistic profit seeker.

The imagery of the "fair" or "carnival" as contrasted with "home" brings to the book yet another juxtaposition. The carnival is a place to make money and a place of disorder associated with Eliza. The order and ritual of home and family life is associated with Gant. The carnival is central to the whole area of mercantile and capitalistic desire which belongs to Eliza. Eliza "thinking of this in the dark pursed her lips with thoughtful satisfaction, unhumourously seeing herself at work in the carnival, taking away quite easily from the hands of folly what it had never known how to keep". Eliza, therefore, is associated with the carnival.

Three times in the novel we meet the imagery of the carnival and each time terrible consequences ensue. Before


10 Ibid., p. 18. (My italics)
these three disasters, however, the concept of the carnival
is carved into the reader's mind because of Eugene's reaction
to it when he goes to the fun house at the St. Louis World's
Fair:

His mind, just emerging from the unreal
wilderness of childish fancy, gave way
completely in this Fair, and he was
paralyzed by the conviction, which often
returned to him in later years, that his
life was a fabulous nightmare and that,
by cunning and conspirator artifice, he
had surrendered all his hope, belief, and
confidence to the lewd torture of demons
masked in human flesh. Half sensible,
and purple with gasping terror, he came
out finally into the warm practical sun-
light.11

Here the image of the carnival is associated with nightmares,
which is another area of imagery running through the book.
At the end of the episode at the St. Louis Fair in 1904,
Eliza and Gant lose their son, Grover, and the elements and
seasons are in sympathy:

There was the rustling of autumn winds, a
whispering breath of departed revelry;
carnival was almost done....Then presently
each thought of the other; they felt suddenly
the horror and strangeness of their sur-
roundings. They thought of the vine-wound
house in the distant mountains, of the roaring
fires, the tumult, the cursing, the pain of
their blind entangled lives, and of the
blundering destiny which brought them here
now in this distant place, with death, after
the carnival's close.12

Here is an explicit contrast between vine-wound home in the
mountains and the carnival, a juxtaposition of symbols rep-


12 Ibid., p. 47.
resenting opposed values.

The death of Grover was the first disaster to come to Eliza as compulsively she strove to break ties with home and family and go out to make her fortune. Her conduct in this regard is treated as though it were unnatural and she is punished for it. "The death of Grover gave Eliza the most terrible wound of her life, her courage was snapped, her slow but powerful adventure toward freedom was absolutely stopped. Her flesh seemed to turn rotten when she thought of the distant city and the fair; she was appalled before the hidden adversary who had struck her down." \(^{13}\)

Then Gant and Eliza returned to Altmont and "During the grim winter the shadows lifted slowly. Gant brought back the roaring fires, the groaning succulent table, the lavish and explosive ritual of daily life. The old gusto surged back in their lives." \(^{14}\)

The roaring fires, food in great abundance, ritual and ceremony are all symbolic of Gant's values which are home-centered. The opposite is true of Eliza. She wears hand-me-down sweaters rather than build a fire. When she is alone, it becomes a joke that she subsists on soup. Completely disorganized, she is surrounded with the chaos of old bottles and bits of string.

After Eliza recovers from the death of Grover her com-

---


14 Ibid., p. 50.
pulsive desire for wealth and property forces her to abandon her home and open a huge boarding-house in Altmont which her family symbolically calls "the barn". Not satisfied with this, she journeys into the South searching for the likely locations to open more boarding-houses. On one of these occasions, she takes Eugene and goes to New Orleans at the Mardi Gras season. Shortly after her return from this carnival Gant suffers a crippling attack of rheumatism which permanently affects his once powerful and artistic hands. Thus the farmer and the artisan, through the symbol of the hands, is crippled as Eliza, the capitalist, again wins in the world of carnival.

The last disaster associated with the carnival is described near the end of the novel. This time Eugene, following his mother's desire for financial independence, goes to work in the dockyards. Rather than go home, he spends a terrible summer, after a year at the university, trying to make money. At one point he nearly starves, and the summer is climaxed by a trip to a carnival on the beach. Then, shortly after his return to college, he is notified that his brother Ben is dying of pneumonia.

Thus the value systems represented by Eliza and Gant are symbolized by the "carnival" and "home", figures which represent notions which are diametrically opposed.

One of the most interesting uses of the principle of juxtaposition in the novel can be seen in the creation of mood. I think I can demonstrate this effectively if we
turn to the most exciting scene in the first part of the
book, the scene which relates Eugene's birth. Several pages
of mood creation precede the actual birth, but since these
would be too long to quote in their entirety I shall demon-
strate the process by a series of shorter quotations. Wolfe
uses alternating sounds, and profits from the already ex-
isting conflict between Gant and Eliza.

We are told of Gant's "great voice below, chanting
obscenities"; then "she heard the sudden wild roar of flame
up the chimney, shaking the house," "she whispered, son,
he'll burn us up", then "they heard a chair fall heavily
below, his curse; they heard his heavy reeling stride....
they heard the sagging creak of the stair-rail as his body
swung against it. "He's coming, she whispered". This is
followed by "....Gant roared, pounding the flimsy door heavily
with his great fist...howling at her", "he screamed a sermon
of profanity and woven invective" "....she lay in her white
faced calm" "....he knew she would not answer....are you there,
I say are you there, woman? he howled barking his big knuckles
in a furious bombardment". "There was nothing but the white
living silence."15

At the risk of minimizing Wolfe's total effect, I have
condensed the scene to demonstrate as clearly as possible the
juxtaposition of howls and whispers. Mood creation, through
the interplay of opposing forces, is a device which Wolfe

15 Thomas Wolfe, Look Homeward, Angel, p. 22-27. (My
Italics).
uses again and again in the novel. Actually the reader should be directed to the several pages in the novel where this scene takes place to see how the contrast grows continuously and how, at the end, Wolfe reverses the entire use of sounds to achieve yet another effect. Now Eliza makes the howls and Gant sleeps: "When the great pangs of birth began in Eliza....he slept. Through the patient pain and care of doctor, nurse and wife." 16

In Chapter VII of the text there is another interesting example of mood creation through juxtaposition. This chapter deals with Gant's last great voyage, a journey to California. On his return home, when he is riding the streetcar, his mind begins to wander. Some critics have pointed out that this section is a demonstration of Wolfe's attempt to use the stream of consciousness technique. But actually it has not about it those elements of seemingly irrational logic characteristic of the pure flow of the conscious or the subconscious. There is about it a distinct "ambiance" of nostalgia; yet the stream is suddenly stopped in several places when Gant is brought back to reality. Wolfe has him enter into a conversation, or Wolfe himself devotes an apparently extraneous paragraph to a description which Gant may not even be sensitive to. A definite mood is created by alternating this dream state with reality.

Chapter XIV depends on juxtaposition for its mood. In this chapter, we get a view of the whole of society in the

16 Ibid., p. 27.
little town of Altmont, just before dawn. In order to render this comprehensive view Wolfe proceeds to leap from place to place in his description of the town. He describes what is going on in several places and he juxtaposes one episode against another in such a carefully worked out pattern that the net result is the feeling in the reader that he is somewhere above the clouds looking down and seeing the entire town all at one time. Wolfe chooses the pre-dawn hours for this bird's-eye view of the town because less is going on and the totality of the image is easier to achieve. The resultant mood in the reader is one in which he says to himself, "I know this place; I know it well". This episode can be compared with James Joyce's "Wandering Rocks" episode in Dubliners.

In Chapter XXIV, in a description of Eugene's wandering with friends through town, Wolfe attempts to capture the mood of a boy who, on the one hand, is sensitively attuned to the imaginative, the lyrical, and the sublime appeal of literature and, on the other, embraces a life in the world of almost sordid realism. A terrible irony is built up in this section by juxtaposing lines of poetry with the most rugged kinds of conversation and description.

During the wanderings of the friends described in this chapter, Ralph offers Julius a bite of his tobacco:

"Want a chew Jule? he said. Julius took the twist, wiped off his mouth with a loose male grin, and crammed a large quid into his cheek. He brought me roots of relish sweet. "Want one high pockets?" he asked Eugene, grinning.
I hate him that would upon the rock of this
world stretch me out longer.
"Hell," said Ralph Rolls, "Handsome would
curl up and die if he ever took a chew."
In spring like torpid snakes my enemies
awaken.
At the corner of Church Street, across from
the new imitation Tudor of the Episcopal
Church, they paused. Above them, on the hill,
rose the steeple of the Methodist and Presby-
terian churches. Ye antique spires, ye distant
Towers!

Some critics have commented on the episodic structure
of Look Homeward, Angel, but none to my knowledge has com-
mented on the order implicit in the arrangement of these
episodes. The order is one we should expect, namely, that
of the juxtaposition of opposites. I believe Chapter IV can
be used as a source of illustration. This chapter is devoted
to several episodes in the first two or three years of Eugene's
life. The first short description tells us of Eugene's re-
ception into the family. This episode is immediate, well
sprinkled with dialogue and touched with warmth and humour.
The reader is involved intimately with the family circle. The
second episode, in direct contrast to the first, is extremely
cold and formal. It deals with the time of Eugene's birth in
relationship to the history of the world. In this the his-
torical consciousness which we discussed earlier in Chapter
III of the thesis is brought into fruition. Here the author
establishes the time, the beginning of the twentieth century,
the year 1900. He tells us what is happening around the

  17 Thomas Wolfe, Look Homeward, Angel, p. 270. (My
  Italics).
world at this particular time and then he moves backward through the centuries to the time when "thirty or forty million years before, our earliest ancestors had crawled out of the primeval slime."18 The synthesis is apparent, for Eugene is not only related to the immediate surroundings but to the whole world and to all time, as is every man. I have already commented on the idea in the novel which sees the characters not only as products of the present time and of their own lives, but as the sum of all that has passed in history of all men.

The remainder of Chapter IV is essentially divided into two more episodes which show the pattern emerging. The first is important because it illustrates an important event in Eugene's maturation. His growing ability finds him learning to use sounds intelligently as symbols. His first words are an imitation of "Swain's cow". Eugene realizes there are two sides to the use of language. He realizes "that his first escape must come through language",19 but he is aware at the same time that, as far as the rest of his family is concerned, "even their speech, their entire fluidity and ease of movement were but meager communicants of their thought and feeling, and served often not to promote understanding but to deepen and widen strife, bitterness and prejudice".20 Despite the fact that language seemed to lead to both enlightenment and

19 Ibid., p. 30.
20 Ibid., p. 31.
confusion, Eugene believed that language held the key to love and to "the earthly paradise" for which he searched.

The next episode placed in juxtaposition, stresses the frailty of life and its nearness to death. Eugene is almost killed in an accident involving a horse and wagon. Thus the juxtaposition of these two episodes places Eugene in the midst of life and also in the midst of death.

Another juxtaposition of episodes which stands out because of the death in life pattern can be seen in Chapter XXX. The first episode involves us in a terrible moment of truth. Gant returns home roaring and drunk. He senses that he is dying, and suspects that he has cancer. The episode ends with the words:

"Is it cancer? I say, is it cancer?"
"Hush! she cried. "No. Of course not! Don't be foolish."
He fell back exhausted, with eyes closed. But they knew that it was.
He had never been told. The terrible name of his malady was never uttered save by him. And in his heart he knew — what they all knew and never spoke of before him — that it was, it was cancer. All day, with fear-stark eyes, Gant had sat, like a broken statue, among his marbles, drinking.
It was cancer.21

Within four hundred words Eugene is caught up in the great love of the book. Life is overflowing in him. "My dear Laura! My dear Laura!" he said in a choking voice. "My sweet, my beautiful Laura! My lovely Laura, I love you, I love you."

The clash between life and death is no more poignantly brought out than at this point, where the very placing of

21 Thomas Wolfe, *Look Homeward, Angel*, p. 360
the episodes forces us to recognize that life and love go on even in presence of death.

The pattern of juxtaposing opposites is continued in the arrangement of chapters and the material covered in each. The first four chapters are a single unit in the sense that Wolfe initiates in these the characters and the major themes. Juxtaposition in these chapters is internal and belongs to the areas already discussed.

Chapter V, however, moves the action of the story out of the family circle and home environment which has been established and into a new milieu. Eliza takes the family to the St. Louis World's Fair and establishes them in a boarding-house which she operates. Tragedy in the form of Grover's death drives Eliza and her family back into Gant's wonderful home, the refuge in the hills. Chapter VI establishes this ritualistic and ordered environment in juxtaposition to the chaos of St. Louis and the World's Fair.

Chapter VII tells of Gant's journey to California and his return home. It is a kind of synthesis since it considers both the journey and the home. In this case however there has been a uniting of the best features of both. This journey is not for profit but for exploration. It is a Ulyssen voyage and the trip home is not tragic but triumphant.

Chapter VIII and Chapter IX consider two aspects of a new theme centered around a new character. Now Eugene steps into the spotlight. In the first of these chapters Eugene's
drive for an essential isolation is established. His love of introverted reflection fed vicariously from the stream of literature and his own fantasy are characteristic. At the end of this chapter and the beginning of the next Eugene is thrust out into the real world of school and neighbourhood. The irony caught here is very powerful. His beautiful imaginings are contrasted against the lewdities and obscenities of the classroom and the back alleys. The boys snicker and write vulgar poems about their teachers and the pig-tailed prim little girls. At the end of Chapter IX another synthesis is hinted at. Eugene discovered ancient myths: "where the will and the deed were not thought darkly on, he spent himself, quilted in golden meadows, or in the green light of woods, in pagan love." 22

Chapter X continues the attempt by Eugene to reconcile the strange and terrifying desire of his parents to thrust him out into the work-a-day world with his own attempt to find the buried life. He has to sell the Saturday Evening Post with his brother Luke, but brother Ben lives in a world apart. He receives pocket money from both but he realizes there is an essential difference. Luke gives because he wants gratitude in return; Ben gives altruistically. Thus Eugene had to resolve at eight years of age the "... torturing paradox of the ungenerous-generous, the selfish-unselfish, the noble-base." 23

22 Thomas Wolfe, Look Homeward, Angel, p. 90.
23 Ibid., p. 96.
Chapters XI and XII form a single unit. These chapters establish Eliza's world in her boarding-house called Dixieland. Eugene is forced to live in her world. In chapter XIII, however, he finds his escape in travel and in the imaginative world generated by his travels: "So did his boundaries stretch into enchantment — into fabulous and solitary wonder broken only by Eliza's stingy practicality, by her lack of magnificence in a magnificent world."²⁴

The pattern of juxtaposing the chapters can be noted by the reader as he develops an awareness of Wolfe's intention. In this case as in every other case when the principle is at work, the author desires the reader to enter a new dimension, a dimension where opposites are fused into new meanings and totalities beyond the scope of ordinary logic. Thus the author depends on the intuitive power of the reader to see beyond and grasp significance which is the result of the position held in an ordered structure.

---

²⁴ Thomas Wolfe, Look Homeward, Angel, p. 128.
CONCLUSION

During the final days of the study that has been presented in this thesis a recently published booklet on Thomas Wolfe written by C. Hugh Holman came to my attention. In this pamphlet published by the University of Minnesota Press, Mr. Holman begins his study with these words:

Thomas Wolfe grappled in frustrated and demonic fury with what he called "the strange and bitter miracle of life," a miracle which he saw in patterns of opposites. The elements of life and of art seem to have existed for him as congeries of contradictions, and he could not understand a thing until its negation had been brought forth. The setting down of these opposites is the most obvious single characteristic of his work....

Thus Mr. Holman was working independently but on the same problem. I am happy to see that my detailed structural analysis of Look Homeward, Angel corroborates his more general statement.

---

1 C. Hugh Holman is Kenan professor of English and chairman of the department at the University of North Carolina, the university which Thomas Wolfe attended as an undergraduate.
APPENDIX A

(a continuation of the study developed in Chapter IV of the thesis)

Reference to Gant as an artisan and a farmer are often contrasted with references to Eliza as a woman of property and commerce who was like a man. These references can be found on pages:

10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 53, 54, 55, 59,
82, 83, 84, 117, 119, 161, 162, 163, 193,
349, 360, 365, 396, 425.

An abundance of good things to eat and drink is associated with Gant or with those who display Gantian characteristics. The sparsity of these things is connected with Eliza and with the Pentland side of the family. References to this juxtaposition of opposite traits can be seen on the following pages of the novel:

8, 13, 15, 25, 33, 34, 39, 41, 42, 44, 50, 51,
52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64,
65, 69, 70, 76, 94, 95, 107, 108, 112, 113,
115, 116, 117, 118, 128, 129, 132, 133, 147,
152, 153, 158, 161, 162, 163, 188, 189, 215,
230, 238, 244, 262, 349, 365, 374, 397, 411,
415.

The Gantian love of rhetoric, bombast and the noble rant of the theatre is juxtaposed with the bird-like winks and nods and the rambling talk of the Pentlands. For reference to these characteristics see the following pages:

3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 15, 16, 20, 22, 24,
28, 39, 40, 41, 51, 52, 53, 55, 64, 65, 67,
68, 85, 84, 108, 111, 112, 118, 126, 158,
165, 171, 175, 177, 190, 203, 213, 214, 217,

The characteristics of both Ben and Luke are separate syntheses of their parents Eliza and Gant, yet they are seen in the novel as characters who are opposites.

67, 93, 95, 96, 98, 99, 100, 102, 137, 143,
198, 210, 211, 212, 213, 214, 242, 314, 416,
417.
As an artisan Grant carves beautifully in stone; the Pentlands are noted for their constant whittling or cutting away at their nails. These characteristics are placed in juxtaposition:

4, 12, 13, 15, 24, 26, 82, 83, 84, 176, 177, 263, 367.

The characteristics belonging to Helen are often juxtaposed with those associated with Eugene.

24, 54, 55, 109, 117, 118, 197, 198, 209, 314, 404, 416, 417.

Daisy is contrasted with Steve.

34, 36, 37, 38, 39, 106, 107, 123, 124, 199.

Throughout the novel Wolfe makes allusions to mythological, biblical or literary personalities and associates these with his own characters. This is an attempt to create characters who are larger than life in order to juxtapose them against reality. This association can be seen on the following pages:

APPENDIX B

(a continuation of the study developed in Chapter V of the thesis)

The acquisition of land and profit-taking from its resale as opposed to the use of land by a farmer or the exploration of the world as an adventurer.


Travelling and voyages of exploration as contrasted with travelling and voyages for profit.


Northern part of the United States contrasted with the South.

4, 5, 6, 7, 13, 40, 58, 60, 61, 69, 119, 125, 127, 128, 133, 138, 265, 279, 296, 303, 329, 389, 390.

The ritual order of home as contrasted with the chaos of the boarding-house.


All the references to the idea of isolation and being a stranger in this world connected to the theme of the lost paradise. The image of the prison is associated with isolation.

5, 10, 13, 18, 19, 31, 47, 48, 57, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 86, 93, 112, 115, 117, 125, 130, 132, 159, 160, 166, 167, 177, 178, 180, 244, 245, 255, 297, 341, 349, 352, 396, 412, 420, 422.
City life as opposed to village culture.

25, 58, 89, 96, 113, 114, 118, 119, 121, 125, 129, 144, 193, 208, 209, 210, 234, 350, 351, 426.

The lost paradise of order, love and perfection before birth and to some extent continuing into childhood and the quest for a worldly paradise of love, fame and wealth developing as the hero grows older.


The tragic consciousness of the shortness of man's life and its dependence on accident and chance as opposed to the unawareness of death and the belief in a blind destiny.


The life of the imagination and of fantasy creation as contrasted with reality and the life in society.

Time as a procession seen in historical perspective and time stopped and frozen by the mind and the imagination. The train image is often associated with time moving whereas dream images are linked to time frozen.


An essential isolation and the desire for a private and buried life as opposed to the brawling and clamorous life in the family and society.


The order of home contrasted with the disorder of the carnival.

18, 33, 34, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 69, 112, 123, 128, 129.
APPENDIX C

(a continuation of the study developed in Chapter VI of the thesis)

The river images as they are connected with Gart and the octopus images as they are connected with Eliza.

15, 44, 45, 46, 57, 64, 65, 69, 129, 133.

Ghost images as concerned with the theme of the lost paradise as opposed to angel images concerned with the theme of the quest for an earthly paradise of love, fame, artistic fulfillment and wealth.


Mountain and hill images as concerned with good things and images of the desert or hot masses or of cinders as concerned with the bad.


The faint bell and horn images connected to the theme of the lost paradise.

6, 31, 32, 68, 71, 73, 74, 77, 78, 161, 167, 169, 170, 172, 173, 244, 245, 296, 304, 362, 369, 376.

The hand images as opposed to the pursed lips image.


Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
White, pale, bloodless as associated with Eliza. Red and vivid colours associated with Gant.

15, 16, 19, 20, 22, 52, 53, 57, 62, 64, 67, 73, 130, 166, 171, 174, 175, 202, 204, 221, 231, 359, 366.

Roaring fires associated with Gant. Little fires and burning embers associated with Eliza.

26, 41, 50, 63, 64, 65, 108, 115, 141, 224, 409.

Baptismal imagery associated with the theme of the lost paradise.

61, 131, 132, 367, 384, 397.

Good things associated with the Spring and Summer placed in opposition to bad things occurring in the Fall and Winter.


The time immutable of earth and rivers as opposed to the transient time of man's life; the use of the stone as an image of time immutable and the leaf as time transient.

4, 6, 58, 64, 65, 82, 93, 133, 134, 352, 245, 375, 412.
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES


SECONDARY SOURCES

Books


Doctoral Dissertations


Articles


--------, "English '37, the Novelist and the Reader: ix," The Saturday Review of Literature, Vol. XVI, No. 17, August 21, 1937.


--------, Thomas Wolfe, Pamphlets on American Writers, No. 6, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis: c 1960.


Stevens, George, "Always Looking Homeward," The Saturday Review of Literature, Vol. XX, No. 9, June 24, 1939.


VITA AUCTORIS

1929 - Born to Alice Morium and Edward Neville. Primary education at Dougall Avenue School. Secondary education at the Honorable J. C. Patterson Collegiate Institute, Windsor, Ontario.

1953 - Received Bachelor's Degree in Honours Philosophy from the University of Western Ontario, London.

1955 - Received certification as a Secondary School teacher of English for the State of Michigan through Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan.

1957 - Received advanced standing in education through graduate studies at the University of California, Riverside, California.

1961 - Elected to the chairmanship of the English Department of Hobichaud High School, Dearborn, Michigan.